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THE

LIFE,

AND

POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS,

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQR.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER,

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL COWPER.

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQR.

" Obversatur oculis ille vir, quo neminen ætas nostra graviorem, sanctiorem, subtiliorem
" denique tulit; quem ego quum ex admiratione diligere cœpissem, quod evenire contra solet,
" magis admiratus sum, postquam penitus inspexi. Inspexi enim penitus: nihil a me ille secretum,
" non joculare, non serium, non triste, non lætum."

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1804.

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DESULTORY REMARKS

ON THE

LETTERS of EMINENT PERSONS,

PARTICULARLY THOSE OF

POPE and COWPER.

"Epistolæ vitam ipsam hominis repræsentant."—ERASMUS.

DESULTORY REMARKS, &c.

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The popular favour shewn to the preceding volumes of this work, may be justly ascribed to that irresistible attraction, which readers of every class have felt and acknowledged, in perusing the Letters of the departed Poet—they breathe, like his verse, such a pure spirit of morality and religion, they are so enlivened by a simple, and graceful display of the benevolent affections, that our country seems to have received them, as a meritorious mother receives a legacy of honour from a dear distinguished son, when it appears to confirm, and to justify, all the fervent, and proud tenderness of her parental feelings.

These sentiments on the Letters of my deceased friend, lead me to seize an opportunity of imparting to the public a recent, and more extensive collection, which the kindness of some respectable individuals, who love the memory of the Poet, has induced them to communicate to his Biographer.

The excellence of Cowper's Letters has a visible proportion to the warmth and purity of his affection towards his correspondents, and as his heart was truly attached both to his young friend Mr. Unwin, and to his old and venerable associate Mr. Newton, his Letters to these two gentlemen, contained in the present volume, are interesting in a very high degree. In writing to Mr. Newton, on a subject of great nicety, (the solicited communication of his new, and then unpublished Poem the Task!) the Poet gives every thing, that is due to the delicacy of friendship, and maintains at the

same time, the dignity, and independence of his own powerful, and upright mind.

Many Letters of this selection belong to the time, in which he was employed on his greatest performance; and they prove the more welcome, as the former correspondence affords very few, that relate to this interesting period.

The new Letters may also attract attention in another point of view: they contain the writer's critical opinions on several of his most celebrated contemporaries. Some readers will probably think, that his own attachment to the graces of simplicity in composition has rendered him severe, to excess, in criticizing the style of two eminent historians, Robertson and Gibbon!

It is pleasing however to discover the genuine sentiments, that literary characters of high distinction entertained of other succesful candidates for fame, who lived in their days. Cowper in criticizing the popular authors of his own nation, cannot fail to interest an English reader. Indeed the Letters of the Poet have been honored with the notice, and the applause of foreigners. A polite and liberal scholar of France, deeply versed in our literature, has confessed, that he never thought the writers of this country equal to those of his own, in all the excellencies of epistolary writing, till he read the Letters of Cowper.

Gratified as I am by a compliment so honorable to my departed friend, I am too zealous an advocate for the literary glory of our country to admit, that the Letter-writers of England are collectively inferior in merit to those of any nation in the modern world.

I am aware that some elegant and respectable critics of our island have made this humiliating concession in favor of France. Melmoth and Warton have both expressed their regret, that we have not equalled our neighbours the French in this branch of literature, but I apprehend a reference to a few remarkable and well known English Letters will be sufficient to vindicate our national honor in this article of taste and refinement.

If

If we turn to an early season of our epistolary language, we may observe, that the Letter of Sir Philip Sidney, to his sister Lady Pembroke, (prefixed as a dedication to his Arcadia) is distinguished by tender elegance, and graceful affection. The Letters of Essex (the idol and the victim of the imperious, and wretched Elizabeth!) have been deservedly celebrated for their manly eloquence. At a period still more early, the Letter of Ann Boleyn to Henry the Eighth, (so justly recommended to public admiration by Addison in the Spectator!) displays all the endearing dignity of insulted virtue, and impassioned eloquence. I know not any Letter in the female writers of France (distinguished as they are by their epistolary talents) that can be fairly preferred to the pathetic composition of this lovely martyr. The French indeed have one celebrated writer of Letters, the Marchioness de Sévignè, to whom we can hardly produce any individual as an exact parallel; but the Letters of Lady Russel (not to mention the Letters of Queen Mary to King William) may be cited as equalling those of Madame Sevignè, in tenderness of heart; and Lady Mary Wortley Montague is assuredly a powerful rival to the Marchioness, in all the charms of easy, elegant language, and in vivacity of description: but in the highest charm of epistolary writing, the charm of gracefully displaying, without disguise and reserve, a most amiable character, and exciting by that display, a tender and lively affection in the reader; in this epistolary excellence, Lady Mary is indeed as unequal to Madame Sevignè, as a thistle is inferior to a rose.

Maternal tenderness is the most lovely, the most useful, and the sublimest quality, that God has given to mortals! It was the great characteristic of Madame Sévignè, and shows itself so repeatedly in her Letters, that it may sometimes prove wearisome to readers not perfectly prepared to sympathize in her predominant feelings; but I question if any tender parent ever felt fatigued in perusing even the excesses of her maternal solicitude. She has herself explained the powerful charm of her own Letters, by describing in the following words, the Letters of her Daughter—

" Je cherche quelquefois où vous pouvez trouver si précisément tout " ce qu'il faut penser et dire; c'est en verité, dans votre cœur; c'est lui qui " ne manque jamais; et quoique vous ayez voulu dire autrefois à la louange " de l'esprit, qui veut contrefaire le cœur, l'esprit manque, il se trompe, il " bronche à tout moment; ses allures ne sont point égales, et les gens " éclairès par le cœur n'y sauroient être trompés. Aimons donc, ma fille, ce " qui vient si naturellement de ce lieu."

The enchanting Mother of Madame de Grignan had the tenderest of hearts: the Mother of the eccentric traveller Wortley Montague, seems to have had a heart of a very different description, when we consider the manner, in which she alludes to the indiscretions of her Son, and the legacy of a guinea, which she bequeathed to him by her will. The Lady, in truth, must have been deplorably deficient in the compassionate virtues of her sex, who could pour forth her spleen with such unmerciful, and disgusting malevolence on the personal deformity of Pope.—It has been suggested indeed, that the satirical Poet was the aggressor, and provoked the indignation of the Lady. The respectable writer, who has recently prefixed memoirs of this Lady, to an elegant edition of her works, has spoken of her with that natural partiality, which an editor is allowed to feel for an author, whom he has long contemplated with pleasure, and especially when that author appears entitled to peculiar regard, as a lady of distinction. In noticing the quarrel between her Ladyship and Pope, he endeavours to throw the odium of that quarrel entirely on the Poet, accusing him of meanness, and of absolute falshood in the declaration, by which he had possitively asserted, that *he was not the aggressor.*— There are no proofs of his falshood: on the contrary, there is a strong presumptive proof, that his declaration was perfectly sincere; as he had before empowered his friend Lord Peterborough, to give the offended Lady in private, a similar assurance. Lord Peterborough was, of all men then living, the last person whom Pope, or any of his friends, could think of engaging

" To lend a lie the confidence of truth."

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The Letter of Lord Peterborough, in which he relates to Lady Mary his conversation with Pope on this affair, concludes with the following benevolent expressions—" I hope this assurance will prevent your further mistakes, and any consequences upon so odd a subject."

Such was the moral and religious character of Pope, that his serious protestation ought to be candidly received as decisive evidence, unless some very strong and unquestionable proof could be alledged against it, and the following words, in his Letter to Lord Hervey, form a protestation as clear and unequivocal, as language can express:—

" In regard to the right honourable Lady, your Lordship's friend, I " was far from designing a person of her condition by a name so derogatory " to her, as that of Sappho, a name prostituted to every infamous creature, " that ever wrote verse, or novels. I protest I never applied that name to her " in any verse of mine, public or private, and (I firmly believe) not in any " letter, or conversation."

The advocate of Lady Mary endeavours to prove the falsity of Pope in this protestation, by adducing passages from his works, in which the name of Sappho must evidently belong to the Lady in question: but the date of those works, in their first publication, is sufficient to vindicate the veracity of the author. He might apply the name of Sappho to Lady Mary, after she had, in the blindness of anger, taken the name to herself, without lessening the credit due to his earlier protestation. It should also be remembered, that the person, to whom he first applied the name of Sappho, was the unfortunate woman, who was tempted by necessity to print the Letters of the Poet to his early friend Mr. Cromwell; and Pope called her Sappho, in compliment to his friend, who had given her the title.

It must however be admitted, that the offensive couplet, which so wonderfully excited the wrath of Lady Mary, is a disgrace to the Poet, from the insufferable indelicacy of its language: but that he asserted an absolute falshood.

falsehood, concerning his own intention, when he wrote it, nothing but irresistible evidence should induce the friends of literature to believe. Pope is peculiarly unfortunate in his two eminent biographers, Johnson and Warton, because each of them had felt the influence of an accidental, and personal prejudice against him, which may account for their failing to vindicate his probity with the zeal of truth, and affection.

Warton considers him as the aggressor in his quarrel with Lady Mary; yet what is here said on that subject, will induce, I trust, every candid reader to credit the express, and opposite assertion of the Poet.

Johnson, in noticing Pope's vindication of himself, in his Letter to Lord Hervey, says, that "to a cool reader of the present time it exhibits nothing, but tedious malignity." The critic's censure on this remarkable composition, is a striking proof of his own malevolent prejudice against Pope. A friend to the Poet would have justly observed, that his Letter to Lord Hervey, is one of the most acute, the most highly polished, and triumphant invectives, that resentment ever drew from a man of genius and virtue, provoked to the utmost by the grossest indignity: it is, in miniature, what the oration of Demosthenes, concerning the crown, appears on a larger scale, a personal defence, animated by conscious integrity, and flaming with proud contempt of an adversary, not destitue of abilities, but overwhelmed in his furious attack upon a man of superior powers, and lacerated by the shafts of eloquence, sharpened by indignation. The triumph of Pope was indeed as complete, as language could render it; but triumphs of this nature deserve perhaps to be considered rather as subjects of regret, than as sources of true glory. If the most eminent departed authors could revisit the human scene, after residing in a purer sphere, and revise their own productions, they would probably annihilate all the virulent invectives, which the intemperance of human passions has so abundantly produced.

Among the pitiable infelicities in the frame of Pope, we may justly reckon the irritability of his temper; and it was an additional misfortune to him, that

that some of the friends, whom he most esteemed, excited him to such an exercise of his talents, as had a tendency to encrease his constitutional infirmity. Atterbury, who after perusing his character of Addison, exhorted him to persevere in the thorny path of satire, would have better consulted both the happiness, and the renown of his friend, had he endeavoured to lead his affectionate and ductile spirit, into a sublimer sphere of literary ambition.

But to speak of Pope as a writer of Letters!—In this character, as in that of a Poet, he has had the ill-fortune to suffer by hasty, and indiscriminate censure. It has been a fashion to say, the Letters of Pope are stiff, and affected: even Cowper has spoken of them in such terms of general condemnation, as, I am confident, his candid spirit would have corrected, had he been led to reflect, and expatiate on the subject; for in truth, though many Letters of Pope have the disgusting defects of formality and affectation, there are several in which he makes a near approach to that excellence, that delightful assemblage of ease, freedom, and dignity, which enchants the reader, in the epistolary language of my departed friend. The Letters of Pope are valuable in many points of view: They exhibit extraordinary specimens of mental power, and a contemplative spirit in very early youth: they shew the progress of a tender, powerful, and irritable mind, in its acquaintance with polished life; the delights, it enjoyed; the vexations, it endured; the infirmities, it contracted; and the virtues, it exerted, in a long career of memorable enmities, and of friendships more worthy of unfading remembrance. He has passed himself so just, and manly a censure on his juvenile affectation of epistolary wit, that, on this point, he is entitled to mercy from the severest of critics. It is not so easy to excuse him for the excess of his flattery; yet on this article, a friendly admirer of the author may find something to alledge in his behalf. Among the most offensive of his Letters, we may reckon those to Lady Mary, peculiarly disgusting from their very gross, and very awkward adulation; but even this may be pardonable, if we allow, what appears very probable, that Pope was so fascinated by the

beauty, and attractions of this accomplished Lady, that he was absolutely in love with her, though not conscious of his passion.—For the credit of both, it may be wished, that all traces of their intimacy, and of their quarrel, could be utterly forgotten; and the more so, because, with all their imperfections, each has displayed such a high degree of literary excellence, that the happier writings of both must be admired, as long as the language of England exists.

Lady Mary deserves to live in the grateful remembrance of her country, as the first English teacher, and patroness of inoculation. She has probably rescued many thousand fair faces from the ravages of a deforming distemper; she would indeed have been still more entitled to perpetual benediction, had she been able to accomplish as much (by example or precept) towards diminishing the barbarous influence of those mental distempers, envy, hatred, and malice; but instead of banishing them from her own spirit, she has exhibited, in writing against Pope, a portentous offspring of their execrable power.—It would be a signal, and a happy compliment to the literary reputa- of this memorable Lady, if her noble descendants would direct, that the bitter verses, to which I allude, should be rejected from the future editions of her works. Her outrageous acrimony would then be gradually forgotten, as all who justly regard her memory, must wish it to be. The verses in question, may be rejected with the greater propriety, as they are said to have been partly composed by her associate, Lord Hervey.—Let the Peer and the Poet (Hervey and Pope) shew themselves alternately mangling each other with equal virulence, though with different abilities, but let not a Lady, so truly admirable in many points of view, be exhibited to all generations, as brandishing the scalping-knife of satirical malignity!

Let us return to the Letters of Pope! If they have sunk in the estimation of the public, there certainly was a time, when they contributed not a little to his renown. Even his unfriendly biographer Johnson, says on this subject—"Pope's private correspondence, thus promulgated, filled the nation

"with

" with praises of his candour, tenderness, and benevolence; the purity of his " purposes, and the fidelity of his friendship."

This is probably the truth, though the Doctor seems to contradict himself in the course of a few pages, and says, with remarkable inconsistency, in speaking of the Letters published by Pope :—" The book never became much " the subject of conversation; some read it as a contemporary history, and " some perhaps as a model of epistolary language, but those who read it, did " not talk of it; not much therefore was added by it to fame or envy."

If the surreptitious edition of Pope's Letters produced such a striking effect in the Poet's favor, as the Doctor at first asserted, it is very improbable, that Pope's authentic publication of his own Correspondence, should be so little regarded. There is also great improbability in the Doctor's conjecture, that Pope himself, with a very mean artifice, contrived the first clandestine appearance of his own Letters. Had he previously wished to print them, he might have pleaded the precedent of Howel's Letters, a popular book of our own country, and of merit sufficient to attract the notice and applause of foreigners; for the learned Morhof, in his History of Literature, expresses a wish, that Howel's Letters may be translated into Latin, or German.—If Pope wished for higher authority, among the Poets of other nations, he might have found such an authority in the elder Tasso, who, in writing to his friend Claudio Tolomei, praises him with enthusiastic admiration, for having published one of the earliest collections of familiar Letters in the Italian language, which the Poet considers as worthy of being regarded as models; and in friendly emulation of which, he avows a design of imparting to the world, two books of his own private Letters.

It is but just however to observe, on the other side, that Erasmus, a favorite author in the estimation of Pope, has said, in one of his Letters, that he would by no means advise any writer to publish his own Letters, in his life time:—" Nulli velim autor esse, ut ipse vivus edat." The mild Erasmus

confesses he wanted courage himself, for such a display of his talents; and declares, he wondered that St. Barnard not only published Letters of his own, but Letters, in which he had not scrupled to stigmatize the names of many.

But to return once more to the Letters of Pope!—"His epistolary excellence, (says Johnson) had an open field; he had no English rival living or dead." The biographer, before he made this remark, enumerated a few English writers of Letters, who had preceded Pope; but he forgot Sir William Temple, whose celebrated Letter to Lady Essex, on the death of her daughter, is a master-piece of tender reproof, and friendly admonition, against the indulgence of intemperate sorrow; a Letter admirable for its eloquence, and worthy of perpetual commendation, as medicinal to every suffering parent, whom tenderness of heart may expose to the pitiable excesses of natural affliction.

If the English are inferior to other nations of the modern world, in the multitude of collected Letters, we may certainly produce single examples of excellence, not surpassed by foreigners, in Letters of diversified description.

In a consolatory Letter, Sir William Temple has no rival to apprehend: in a Letter of manly application to the mercy of a tyrant, (perhaps the kind of Letter, which it may be most difficult to write simply, and gracefully!) the Poet Cleveland, addressing Oliver Cromwell, appears entitled to a similar encomium: and for a Letter of laconic dignity, we may produce, without a fear of seeing her surpassed, the "high-born, and high-spirited Anne, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery."

Lord Bacon has expressed his very high esteem of epistolary writing in the following terms:—"Letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment the best." Yet this wonderful man is himself very far from appearing to such advantage in his Letters, as in his Moral Essays—the latter contain the pure essence of his powerful mind, the former are debased by the dregs of it. His Essays are an exquisite production

of

of knowledge, wisdom, and piety—his Letters, a coarse tissue of artifice, adulation, and servility.

In a Letter to Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Davies, who was gone to compliment James the First, on his accession to the throne of England, Bacon says—"I commend myself to your love, and the well-using my name ——— "in imprinting a good conceit and opinion of me, chiefly in the King —— "so desiring you to be good to *concealed Poets*, I continue your assured friend."

These remarkable words seem to imply that Bacon wished Davies to represent him to the King as privately devoted to poetry, and so he sometimes was. If he had this intention, it proves that he very early understood the various modes of obtaining favour with the new monarch, for when James saw Davies, he asked if he was *Nosce teipsum*, alluding to the title of his celebrated poem, and being informed that his new attendant was indeed the author of that admirable work, he gave him expectations of future promotion, which he soon fulfilled. There is a Letter of Bacon to James, on being created Viscount St. Albans, which enumerates the various favours he had received from that sovereign; but instead of displaying the genuine eloquence of manly gratitude, it contains a very poor conceit. Even in writing to the King's daughter, the Queen of Bohemia, on the occasion of presenting to her, his History of Henry the Seventh, Bacon is far from producing a graceful Letter.—But it is painful to dwell on the imperfections of so great a genius—let us return to the moral Poet, who described him truly and energetically, in a single verse.

One of the most interesting, and manly Letters, of the collection addressed to Pope, is the last of Arbuthnot's, containing the dying advice of that genuine, accomplished friend, to the too-irritable Poet. Pope, in his reply, assigns his reasons for not adhering exactly to admonition, of which he acknowledges the kindness: but, as Warton has very justly observed, on the occasion, his reasons are not so solid as the admonition; and indeed the Poet's Letter is by no means so gracefully written, as that of the friendly

physician,

physician, a man equally distinguished by the moral gaiety of his life, and by his serene preparation for death—a man so happily free from all flagrant misconduct, that his greatest fault seems to have been an inattention to the due preservation of his own admirable writings; for some of them, it is said, he suffered his children to destroy, in the shape of playthings.

Of Pope's Letters, taken altogether, it may be justly asserted, that they tend to confirm that brief, but honorable eulogy, which Bolingbroke, in a season of awful veracity, pathetically pronounced over his expiring friend: "O great God! what is man?—I never knew a person, that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or a warmer benevolence for all mankind!"

Perhaps the most admirable of Pope's Letters is his farewell to Atterbury: it displays both the tenderness, and the dignity of true friendship; for the writer was perfectly sincere in his enthusiastic attachment both to Atterbury, and to Bolingbroke, two extraordinary men, whose social accomplishments were so powerfully brilliant, that they seem to have rendered the moral and penetrating Pope absolutely blind to that pestilent ambition, which spotted the character both of the statesman and of the prelate.

Johnson speaks candidly of Pope in saying, "He is seen in the collection "of his Letters, as connected with the other contemporary wits, and certainly "suffers no disgrace in the comparison." This is undoubtedly true in the important articles of strong sense, and lively fancy, but he frequently appears inferior to his correspondents in the lighter graces of epistolary language, particularly inferior to Bolingbroke, whose style is remarkable for the happiest union of ease, vivacity, and vigour.

The Letters of Bolingbroke lately printed, (in Mr. Coxe's elaborate and candid Life of Sir Robert Walpole) from the Egremont Papers, are admirably written; and I may assist perhaps some future biographer of Bolingbroke by observing, that the private collection, from which the Letters I speak of, were selected, contains one very memorable Letter, though properly omitted

omitted by the historian of Walpole, as not connected with his design:—it is a Letter of great pathos and eloquence, dated Argeville, July 7, 1740, and addressed to the Son of Sir William Wyndham, on the death of his Father; a Letter highly honorable to the writer, in the character of a friend!

Bolingbroke and Swift, have both spoken of the most eminent Letter-Writers, in their correspondence with Pope; let us observe how each expresses himself on the talent, in which they both excelled.

"I believe" says Swift to Pope, (October 21, 1735,) "my Letters "have escaped being published, because I writ nothing but nature, and "friendship, and particular incidents, which could make no figure in writing: "I have observed, that not only Voiture, but likewise Tully, and Pliny, writ "their Letters for the public view, more than for the sake of their corres-"pondents, and I am glad of it, on account of the entertainment they have "given me."

"I seek no epistolary fame," says Bolingbroke, in the postscript of an earlier Letter from Pope to Swift, (April 14, 1730,) "but am a good deal "pleased to think, that it will be known hereafter, that you and I lived in "the most friendly intimacy together. Pliny writ his Letters for the public, "so did Seneca, so did Balzac, Voiture, &c. Tully did not; and therefore "these give us more pleasure, than any which have come down to us from anti-"quity. When we read them, we pry into a secret, which was intended to "be kept from us—that is a pleasure—we see Cato, and Brutus, and Pompey, "and others, such as they really were; and not such, as the gaping multi-"tude of their own age took them to be; or as Historians and Poets have "represented them to ours; that is another pleasure. I remember to have "seen a procession at Aix-la-Chapelle, wherein an image of Charlemagne is "carried on the shoulders of a man, who is hid by the long robe of the imperial "saint; follow him into the vestry, you see the bearer slip from under the "robe, and the gigantic figure dwindles into an image of the ordinary size, "and is set by among other lumber."

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The noble author has very happily illustrated his just idea, concerning the ostentatious display of public characters, imperfectly known; but the opposite intentions, which he ascribes to Cicero and to Pliny, concerning their Letters, were not, I apprehend, exactly the intentions of the two illustrious Romans, whose names have derived so much lustre from their epistolary talents. All the Letters of Cicero were certainly not intended for the eye of the public, but many most probably were so. The great orator had so fervent a passion for fame, that he was eager to spread every sail, by which a breath of glory could be caught.

The more succinct, but less powerful Pliny, very candidly confesses a similar passion. He takes a pride in the elegance of his Letters :—" Habeant nostræ queque literæ aliquid non humile, nec sordidum, nec privatis rebus inclusum." Yet Pliny seems not to have intended, that the world should see such of his Letters, as relate only to the little circumstances of his private and domestic life. He is a gainer however by the perfect knowledge of his character, which these Letters afford, for, in various points of view, he appears interesting and amiable.

Montaigne is uncommonly severe in describing the Letters of Cicero and Pliny, as proofs of their inordinate vanity; but if that pleasant essayist should excite a frown by the severity of his remarks on these favorite authors, he may lead his reader to smile again at the honest vanity, he displays himself, while he is censuring the vanity of the two Roman Consuls; since in the same chapter, he commends his own talents for epistolary composition.

It may be regretted, that in the rich mass of antient Grecian literature, we find no collections of familiar Letters to be compared with those of Cicero and Pliny. Indeed there are hardly any written by men of eminence, and entitled to the name of familiar Letters, if we except a few of Æschines, the orator, who seems, in his epistolary talent, to have been the Bolingbroke of Athens. In one of his Letters he relates, with great vivacity, a ludicrous and licentious

licentious adventure of a young fellow-traveller, with whom he visited the plain of Troy: as it seems to have been the intention of Æschines, in these travels, to compare the scenery around him with the descriptions of it exhibited by Homer, it may be wished, that this eloquent Athenian (whose command of language was in some points perhaps superior to that of his triumphant rival Demosthenes) had made his intended comparison the subject of another Letter.

Although the Letters of philosophers and rhetoricians to princes, are scarcely to be classed with such epistolary composition, as arises from familiarity and friendship, I am tempted to notice two remarkable Letters included in the works of Plato and Isocrates—the first may be fairly considered as a private Letter, since the philosopher entreats his correspondent, the younger Dionysius, to read it repeatedly, and then to burn it. In truth he had abundant reason for such a request, as the Letter contains a singular confession that this admired instructor had never published his own genuine sentiments on some abstruse points of philosophy, but contented himself with delivering the opinions of his master.—Vide Platonis, vol. xi. p. 72—Edit. Biponti.

The Letter of Isocrates, to which I have alluded, is addressed to Alexander of Macedon, during the life of his father Philip—it is a brief, benevolent, and graceful compliment, from an illustrious veteran of literature, to a highly promising youth.—Vide Isocratis, vol. i. p. 454.—Edit. Auger.

When we consider the passion for news which animated the Greeks, and the extreme vivacity of their character, it seems rather surprising, that in the remains of antiquity, we find such a small number of early Greek epistles, and so little said by their rhetoricians, concerning the most admired of their epistolary writers. Some information on this subject may however be gleaned from the treatise on elocution, that bears the name of Demetrius Phalareus, from the collections of Stobæus, and the Bibliotheca of Photius.

The learned Abbè Barthelemy, who, in his elaborate and masterly work of many years, Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis, describes the library of an

Athenian, does not represent it (if I remember right) as containing any collection of Letters. Yet probably the libraries of Athens at that period, were not destitute of such an amusing, and instructive branch of literature. The first collector of Letters, if we may rely on the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus and of Tatian, was a Persian princess, who bore the name of Atossa; for the Greek expression used by these authors, seems rather to mean the forming a collection of Letters, than the teaching how Letters should be written, as some of their interpreters have strangely supposed. Who this interesting Atossa really was, although she is called by Bentley the mother of Xerxes, it would not perhaps be easy to ascertain, as the name belonged to several Asiatic princesses, and Clemens Alexandrinus is supposed by some critics, to have confounded Atossa with Semiramis.

But to return to Grecian Letter-writers! Demetrius Phalareus, or the rhetorician who assumed his name, celebrates Aristotle for having perfectly conceived the proper idea of a Letter; observing also, that the morals of a man may be discerned in all his compositions, but above all in his Letters.—The name of Aristotle reminds me, that the memorable Letter of Philip to that philosopher, on the future education of Alexander, may be regarded as a model of princely politeness.

To become intimately acquainted with the illustrious characters of Greece, in her days of glory, by the aid of their familiar Letters, would afford such a gratification to the lovers of literature, that it is not surprising, if some Letters have been fabricated for the purpose of ascribing them to the splendid names of Themistocles, Euripides, &c.

In the collection of Greek Letters, whose authenticity has been so frequently questioned, there are three of a very interesting nature, ascribed to Theano, the wife, or, as some authors imagine, the daughter of Pythagoras. These Letters are so good, that the accomplished German poet and moralist, Wieland, has translated them into his own language, asserting, that their merit has

has induced him to believe them genuine; and strongly recommending to the ladies of his country, the laudable sentiments they display. The first Letter contains advice to a mother, on the education of her children; the second, advice to a wife, not to resent too roughly the infidelity of a husband; and the third, to a young married friend, on the management of her female domestics.

The authenticity of the five Letters ascribed to Euripides, is strenuously asserted by Barnes, and as vehemently denied by Bentley; two laborious and deep searchers into all the reliques of Grecian literature! yet two pedantic scholars, so ungraceful in the use of their own language, that neither of them can be justly supposed competent to decide a doubtful question of this kind, by that perfect delicacy of taste, which is sometimes imagined to constitute a sort of intuitive sagacity, sufficient to detect any literary imposture.

Experience has abundantly shewn, that in questions concerning the authenticity of antient compositions, "much may be said on both sides," to use the gentle phrase of the benevolent Sir Roger de Coverly; and the epistles of Phalaris are a memorable example to confirm his remark. Those epistles afforded an extensive field to the active, and contentious spirit of Bentley, who delighted to display his admirable erudition, and his controversial fortitude, against a host of assailants. They seem to have considered him as the Polypheme of literature, and to have amused themselves in deriding the intemperance of his anger, though they might shudder at his strength. Had not that extraordinary scholar been influenced by a singular passion for such disputes, he would hardly have produced his curious dissertation on the epistles of Phalaris, as the young nobleman, who re-published those epistles, suggested, in his preface, some arguments, that tended to prove them spurious, instead of asserting that they were not so. Bentley prided himself on detecting the imposture. He is believed to have had truth on his side in denying them to be genuine. An admirable judge of such controversies, the late accomplished and amiable Mr. Tyrwhit, represents Bentley crushing his adversaries as with a stroke of thunder,

(adversarios velut fulmine prostravisse contentus) yet he conducted the dispute in such a manner, that his young and graceful antagonist, with the assistance of some powerful allies, so far triumphed over the thundering critic, that he exposed the Doctor's petulance to universal derision; and abundantly proved, that however profound he might be as a scholar, he was deplorably deficient in those accomplishments, which ought ever to accompany great learning—good-manners, good-language, and good nature!

Not content with asserting, that the epistles could not be written by Phalaris, Bentley considered them as the composition of some foolish sophist; an idea, which only shews, that he had not taste enough to relish that kind of merit, which the epistles certainly possess, and which had so forcibly struck the accomplished Sir William Temple, that he was lavish in their praise; the merit, I mean, is that of exhibiting many noble sentiments, embellished by brief, perspicuous, and energetic expression.

Here let us observe, to the honour of poetry, that the epistles of Phalaris are partly indebted for their celebrity to that benevolent satisfaction, which readers in general receive, in finding a great poet treated with peculiar regard, and distinction, by a person possessed of despotic authority. The Letters, in which Phalaris is supposed to represent himself as friendly, and liberal to the poet Stesichorus, and to his family, inspire an inclination to believe them genuine, because they soothe the mind with an idea, that great literary talents are able to soften, and correct the ferocity of a tyrant.

It is however most probable, they were not written by Phalaris: but of the greater part of them it may justly be said, they are evidently not the compositions of any foolish, and frivolous character.

If I might venture to indulge a hasty conjecture, where conjectures are so likely to mislead, I would say, it seems not improbable, the epistles of Phalaris might be written by some young Roman, of a cultivated, and powerful mind, who, like Atticus, Cicero, and Brutus, devoted some time at Athens,

to

to acquire completely the talent of writing the Greek language, and who, in the course of such study, might compose, as literary exercises, the letters in question.

Having started the supposition, I leave the learned, and ingenious reader, to amuse himself by examining, how far it will account (as I think it may) both for the merits, and the defects, that have given such a sort of motley reputation to these memorable epistles. It is now a general persuasion, that they are not genuine, but many of the arguments that Bentley produced, to prove them not written by Phalaris, were arguments of an unfortunate cast, and turned against him by his adversaries, with admirable dexterity of derision. There is hardly any piece of controversial ridicule, more happy in its execution, than that part of Boyle's reply to Bentley, in which he shews, how a future critic might prove, in copying the Doctor's arguments against Phalaris, that Bentley's dissertation was not written by the Doctor.

In saying, that the epistles of Phalaris might be written by a Roman student at Athens, I do not mean to insinuate, that none of the later Grecian sophists had talents equal to such a production. In that tribe of literary characters, (often contemptuously described, and often meriting such contempt) there were undoubtedly several individuals perfectly able to fabricate a fictitious series of sensible, and animated epistles.

Among the works of the sophists, who bore the name *Philostratus*, there is a curious Letter, in which the author delivers his opinion of epistolary writers.

In enumerating those, who appear to him *after the antients*, (such is his expression) to have best understood the proper character of epistolary language, he mentions Apollonius and Dion, among the philosophers; of commanders, Brutus, or his secretary; of the emperors, Marcus Aurelius; of the orators, Herodes Atticus:—he censures however the latter for an affectation of attic elegance; and very justly observes, that perspicuity should be the primary quality in all works of literature, and especially in a Letter.

Of

Of all the later Pagan epistolary writers in Greek, whose productions have been preserved, Libanius is one of the most voluminous, and he has been celebrated for excellence in this species of composition. Gibbon speaks too contemptuously perhaps on the whole of his extensive correspondence, near two thousand Letters! In some of them the high-spirited friend and correspondent of Julian, is far from deserving the title of *a dreaming pedant.* If he was vain in the display of his own literary powers, he was liberal in commending the eloquence of a rival. In one of his Letters to Themistius, (printed in the Bibliotheca Græca of Fabricius) Libanius bestows on the philosopher this singular eulogy—"Telemachus did not so much resemble his father in person, as you resemble Demosthenes in your orations." Themistius was not only distinguished by his eloquence, but regarded for the benevolent mildness of his character. He seems to have enjoyed the rare felicity of being equally esteemed by a Christian bishop, and by an apostate emperor. Some Letters of Julian are addressed to him, which leads me to observe that Julian is entitled to some praise for his epistolary talents, particularly for a manly expression, contained in one of his short Letters to a painter—"Such as you have seen me, such represent me!" Happy if he had discovered the same attachment to simplicity and truth, in the more important concerns of religion. Some Christian fathers of the church, in the age of Julian, are eminent for epistolary elegance, especially the poetical Gregory Nazianzen—the bishop to whom I alluded, as the friend of the philosopher Themistius.

But to descend to the Letter-writers of the modern world. On the multitudes in different nations, whose epistles are printed, in Latin, I will only say, that the Eloisa who inspired Pope, stands at the head of this innumerable host, for the eloquence of the heart. The use of Latin retarded the advances of epistolary improvement in the slowly formed languages of modern Europe, particularly in French, English, and German. Italian vivacity, and Spanish

Spanish gravity, seem to have employed themselves in making collections of private Letters, before any such publication appeared in the languages of England, or France. I have already mentioned the Letters of the elder Tasso. Italian Letters still more remarkable, were printed at Venice, in 1551, the Letters of ladies, princes, and various eminent persons, addressed to that strange example of extensive, but short-lived celebrity, the satirist Aretine, whose own Letters amount to six volumes. Montaigne represents the Italians as the chief publishers of Letters; and says, he possessed in his own library, a hundred volumes of such publications; and that he esteemed the Letters of Annibal Caro as the best of all.

The literature of Italy has been enriched with many excellent collections of Letters since the days of Montaigne: and with one peculiarly interesting to those, who delight in anecdotes relating to painting and sculpture: a collection, in seven quarto volumes, of Letters written by the most eminent artists, and relating to works of art.

In the Spanish language, there is a copious volume of Letters by Don Antonio de Guevara, a prelate, who held the office of historiographer to the emperor Charles the Fifth; and a prelate of so nice a conscience, that he directed by his will a part of his salary to be restored to his Majesty, for a year, in which he had added nothing to his chronicle. His style, as an historian, has been generally censured; but if we may judge of his personal character from his Letters, he appears to have been an amiable man. In one he reproves a female relation, with good-nature, for intemperate sorrow on the death of a little dog; and in another he draws the character of a true friend, with great energy of sentiment, and expression.

The scholars of Spain wrote and printed Letters in their own language, before the polished age of the emperor Charles the Fifth. There is a collection of Spanish Letters by Fernan Gomez de Ciudareal, the first edition of which is said to have been printed in 1499. The author was physician to John the

Second,

Second, King of Castile—they contain some entertaining particulars relating to the history, and manners of that time. It appears from one of them, that the king amused himself in improving a Spanish couplet of his poet and historiographer, Juan de Mena, who seems to have been very highly esteemed, as a friend, by the author of these Letters.

The last of the collection, dated July 1454, contains an account of the king's death—he said to his physician, three hours before he expired:—"I wish I had been born the son of a mechanic, and not king of Castile."

The physician seems to have had a personal regard for his sovereign, as he intimates, in the close of his Letter, that he might be retained in the court of his successor, but that he felt too old to attach himself to a new master.

The French have undoubtedly many collections of Letters, that deserve high commendation; but their two celebrated Letter-writers, who were for some time the favorites of Europe, Voiture and Balzac, lost much of their celebrity, when taste grew more refined, and learned to value ease and simplicity, as graces essential to a good epistolary style. They had however the merit of giving an early polish to the language of their country;—They introduced into French prose, a degree of fluency, and force, which it had not before, but which subsequent writers have carried to much greater perfection. Every modern nation might exhibit a collection of interesting Letters, so judiciously formed, as to display, in a very agreeable manner, the rise and gradual progress of improvement in its language. In France the writers of printed Letters are so numerous, that the difficulty of selection would arise from their multitude. Lord Orrery, the translator of Pliny, bestows singular commendation on the epistolary language of Pelisson, and Dr. Warton has justly said, in a remark prefixed to the Letters of Pope, that the Letters of Voltaire, amounting to eighteen volumes: "contain a variety of literary "history and criticism, written also to the most celebrated persons of the "age, hardly to be equalled or excelled."

The

The Letters of Voltaire are indeed admirable for their gaiety, and their wit: there is also a rich vein of tender, bold, and generous humanity, running through his extensive correspondence, that may sometimes almost lead a reader to exclaim, in the words of his own Zara, as she speaks in English—

"Were he but Christian, what could man be more!"

But the bitter leaven of sarcastic infidelity predominates so frequently in his Letters, that it excites, in a Christian reader, pain proportioned to the admiration awakened by the versatile powers of a man, unrivaled in the variety, and in the vivacity of his talents.

If the Letters of any French Poet are worthy of being compared with the Letters of Cowper, for purity and tenderness of sentiment, they must be the Letters of Racine to his friend Boileau, and those addressed to his own son.

If among the popular authors of other nations, we should seek for the individual, who may be mentioned as parallel to Cowper, in the simplicity, the sweetness, and the sanctity of his character, both as a man, and a poet, perhaps we might most properly fix on the amiable Gellert, the favorite of Germany! Though not equal to the author of the Task, in the energy of his poetical powers, he excited in his countrymen, of all ranks, that enthusiastic regard, which England, to her own honour, has felt for the character of Cowper, and which, I trust, she will continue to manifest, as Germany shewed her gratitude to the genius and virtues of Gellert, by an affectionate contribution to honour his memory with a public monument.

The Letters of Gellert display an uncommon share of that tender melancholy, that religious fervor, that innocent playfulness of fancy, and that spirit of genuine friendship, which give such attraction to the correspondence of Cowper, who in these qualities, and in the elegant simplicity of his style, has hardly an equal, and certainly not a superior, among the most celebrated Letter-writers of England.

It is remarkable, though I do not recollect to have seen it observed by those, who have lately enumerated our early epistolary writers, that Bishop Hall, who spoke of himself, with complacency, as the first of English satirists, has taken a laudable pride in declaring himself the first publisher of English epistles.

There is a little volume neatly printed in 1608, containing four decads of epistles, by this patriotic and memorable divine. To these he added two decads more in 1611.

In dedicating his book to Prince Henry, the author says:—" Further, " (which these times account not the least praise) your grace shall herein " perceive a new fashion of discourse, by epistles, new to our language, " usual to others; and (as novelty is never without some plea of use) more " free, more familiar. Thus we do but talk with our friends by our pen, and " express ourselves no whit less easily, somewhat more digestedly."

Many of Hall's epistles may be considered as brief, and excellent sermons, being full of religious admonition: there are however a few of them, that seem fairly entitled to the name of familiar Letters; particularly the fifth epistle of the first decad—to Sir Thomas Challoner, "a report of some observations in my travell." Sir Edmund Bacon was Hall's fellow-traveller. The eighth epistle in the same decad: to the young Earl of Essex, " advice for his travels." And the second epistle of the second decad: " of the benefit of retirednesse, and secrecy," to Sir Edmund Bacon.

In a passion for retirement, in vivacity of imagination, and purity of heart, this exemplary prelate seems to have resembled the more illustrious and poetical Recluse of Weston; and considering the age in which the bishop wrote, it is paying a very high, and a just compliment to his epistolary language, to say, it has several passages, which might be almost mistaken for the language of Cowper.

This

This remark leads me to return to the Letters of my friend.—I have so warmly expressed my opinion of their singular excellence, that it is unnecessary to add any words in their praise. The peculiar ease, harmony, and grace of Cowper's epistolary style, must be obvious to every intelligent reader; nor is a comment required to prove, that the universal delight, with which his Letters are perused, arises particularly from their displaying

" That lovely sight, a guileless human heart!"

To parody a verse of Young, which it is hardly possible to pronounce, in its original state, without shuddering at the dark, and distressful idea it exhibits,

The Letters of a recluse are naturally full of egotism—but egotism, which may be a disgrace indeed to some compositions, is rather a merit, and a charm in the Letters of persons, whom we love and esteem. Gibbon says happily, on this subject, in writing to his excellent Mother-in-law:—" We all " delight to talk of ourselves, and it is only in Letters, in writing to a friend, " that we can enjoy that conversation, not only without reproach, or inter- " ruption, but with the highest propriety, and mutual satisfaction."

The lovers of genius and virtue, must peruse the correspondence of Cowper with the eyes of a friend; and in doing so, they will feel gratified in being enabled to read, what was evidently written for the eyes of friendship alone. They will not think, that he talks too much of himself; for what man, so worthy of being intimately known, could be thought to do so, in talking to a friend, without vanity, or affectation?

In preparing the following selection for the press, I have endeavoured to recollect on every doubtful occasion, the feelings of Cowper; and made it a rule to reject, whatever my perfect intimacy with those feelings could lead me to suppose the spirit of the departed Poet might wish me to lay aside, as unfit for publication. I consider an editor as guilty of the basest injury to the

dead, who admits into the posthumous volumes of an author, whom he professes to love, and admire, any composition, which his own conscience informs him, *that author*, if he could speak from the tomb, would direct him to suppress.

On this principle, I have declined to print some Letters, which entered more than I think the public ought to enter, into the history of a trifling feminine discord, that disturbed the perfect harmony of the happy trio at Olney, when Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin were the united inspirers of the Poet; yet, as the brief, and true account, which I gave of their separation, has been thought to cast a shade of censure on the temper of Mrs. Unwin, which I was far from intending, in justice to the memory of that exemplary, and sublime female friend, I will here introduce a passage from a Letter of Cowper to the Reverend William Unwin, honorable to both the ladies in question, as it describes them in a moment of generous reconciliation:—

"I inclose a Letter from Lady Austen, which I beg you to return to "me in your next. We are reconciled: she seized the first opportunity to "embrace your Mother with tears of the tenderest affection, and I, of course, "am satisfied. We were all a little awkward at first, but now are as easy as "ever."

This Letter happens to have no date, but the expressions I have cited from it, are sufficient to prove, that Mrs. Unwin, instead of having shewn an envious infirmity of temper on this occasion, must have conducted herself with a delicate liberality of mind.

If in selecting Letters of my friend for the press, I should alarm the volatile reader by admitting several of a devotional spirit, I will ingenuously confess my reason for imparting them to the public. There is such tender simplicity, such attractive sweetness, in these serious Letters, that I am confident few professed works of devotion can equal their efficacy in awakening

and

and confirming sincere and simple piety, in persons of various persuasions. His Letters and his Poetry will, in this respect, alternately extend, and strengthen the influence of each other. He wrote occasionally to clerical friends of the established church, and to others among the dissenters. His heart made no difference between them, for it felt towards both the fraternal sensations of true Christianity.

The cordial admirers of the Poet, may exult to reflect, that after perusing both his deliberate productions, and the casual effusions of his pen, they may justly say of each, what Prior said in verse to Sherlock, on his practical discourse concerning death—

> " Of heavenly manna 'tis a second feast,
> A nation's food, and all to every taste."

In continuing to commend the compositions of Cowper, I am perfectly aware, that I have been censured as too lavish in the praise of my friend's. My only reply to such censure shall be to close these desultory remarks on epistolary writers, with a brief, and sweet epistle of Pliny, which expresses most happily all my own feelings on the censure, to which I allude. I am gratified in observing, that I share the discredit, or the honor, arising from such a charge, with one of the most estimable writers of the antient world, and to justify my perseverance in sentiments, which no adversary could induce me to renounce, I have a pleasure in adopting the very apposite vindication of an advocate so illustrious, and so amiable.

" *Ais quosdam apud te reprehendisse tanquam amicos meos ex omni occasione ultra modum laudem. Agnosco crimen, amplector etiam. Quid enim honestius culpâ benignitatis? Qui sunt tamen isti, qui amicos meos melius norint? Sed ut norint, quid invident mihi felicissimum errorem? Ut enim non*

sint

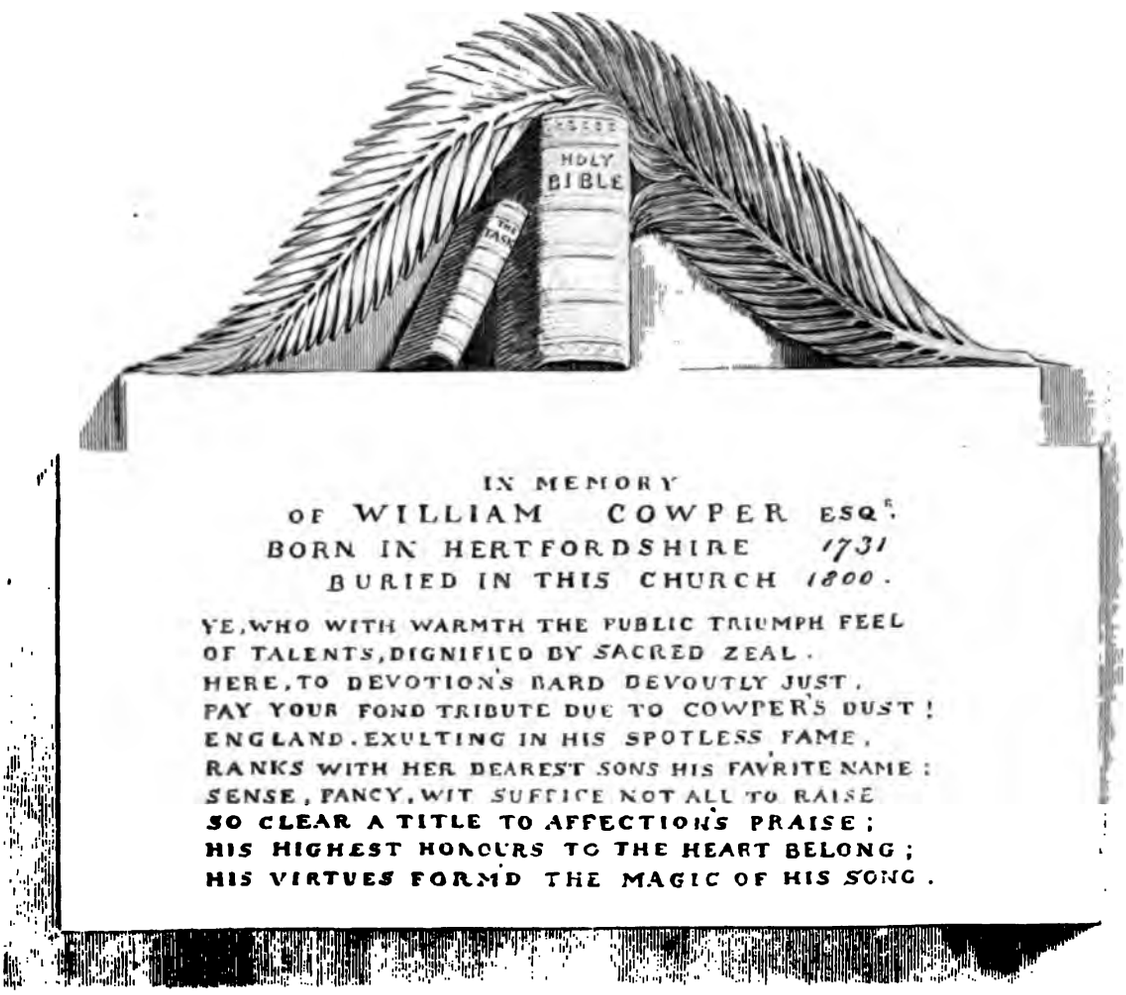
sint tales, quales à me prædicantur, ego tamen beatus quod mihi videntur.—Igitur ad alios hanc sinistram diligentiam conferant: nec sunt parum multi, qui carpere amicos suos judicium vocant: mihi nunquam persuadebunt, ut meos amari à me nimium putem—Vale."————Plin. Lib. 7—Epist. 28.

Since these Remarks were sent to the press, a young friend, extensively acquainted with German literature, obligingly sent me a work of Gellert, which I had never seen, and which my friend had kindly translated into English, that I might peruse it with the greater rapidity. It is entitled—"A practical Essay on good Taste in Epistolary Writing." It's chief purpose was, to caution the author's young disciples against the false taste that had prevailed in some admired Letter-writers of his own country, but it contains many judicious observations, on various authors of universal celebrity.

"The number of German treatises on Letter-writing (says Gellert) is "considerable, those in Latin however are by far the most numerous. They "have been chiefly composed by men of deep erudition, and serve to shew "that the attempt to reduce Letter-writing to a regular art is a fruitless "undertaking."

Gellert, after enumerating some of these unprofitable attempts, proceeds thus,—"The short Letter of Gregory Nazianzen to Nicobulus, on the concise-"ness, perspicuity, and elegance of a Letter, is worth more perhaps than "many cumbrous treatises." This animated eulogy led me to examine the Letter so commended, and a very lively passage in the end of it pleased me particularly. "I will close (says Gregory to his correspondent) by telling "you

" you what I heard from a man of judgment, speaking of the eagle—when " the birds assembled to chuse a sovereign, and most of them had adorned " themselves with a variety of ornaments, the eagle was allowed to be the " most beautiful, because he made no pretensions to beauty." This little fable may serve to illustrate the singular charm that belongs to Cowper, in his epistolary character——the language of his Letters, is the eagle of Gregory.



IN MEMORY
OF WILLIAM COWPER ESQ.
BORN IN HERTFORDSHIRE 1731
BURIED IN THIS CHURCH 1800.

YE, WHO WITH WARMTH THE PUBLIC TRIUMPH FEEL
OF TALENTS, DIGNIFIED BY SACRED ZEAL.
HERE, TO DEVOTION'S BARD DEVOUTLY JUST,
PAY YOUR FOND TRIBUTE DUE TO COWPER'S DUST!
ENGLAND, EXULTING IN HIS SPOTLESS FAME,
RANKS WITH HER DEAREST SONS HIS FAVRITE NAME:
SENSE, FANCY, WIT SUFFICE NOT ALL TO RAISE
SO CLEAR A TITLE TO AFFECTION'S PRAISE;
HIS HIGHEST HONOURS TO THE HEART BELONG;
HIS VIRTUES FORM'D THE MAGIC OF HIS SONG.

A Sketch of the Monument
Erected in the Church of East Dereham in Norfolk
In Memory of William Cowper Esqr
Etchd by W Blake from the original Model
by John Flaxman Esq Sculptor in the Hayley

Frances Stone del. W. Blake sculp

A View of St Edmund's Chapel
in the Church of East Dereham,
Containing the Grave of William Cowper Esq

THE

LIFE

OF

COWPER.

PART THE FOURTH.

Vel ut auctoritate testimonii, vel indicio benevolentiæ vel suavitate ingenii perfruamur.

CICERO.

LETTER I.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 18, 1778.

DEAR UNWIN,

I feel myself much obliged to you for your kind intimation, and have given the subject of it all my best attention, both before I received your Letter and since. The result is, that I am persuaded it will be better not to write. I know the man and his disposition well, he is very liberal in his way of thinking, generous and discerning. He is well aware of the tricks that are played upon such occasions, and after fifteen years interruption of all intercourse between us, would translate my Letter into this language—pray remember the poor—This would disgust him, because he would think our former intimacy disgraced by such an oblique application. He has not forgotten me, and if he

had, there are those about him, who cannot come into his presence without reminding him of me, and he is also perfectly acquainted with my circumstances. It would perhaps give him pleasure to surprize me with a benefit, and if he means me such a favour, I should disappoint him by asking it.

I repeat my thanks for your suggestion; you see a part of my reasons for thus conducting myself, if we were together I could give you more.

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.

LETTER II.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 26, 1779.

I am obliged to you for the Poets, and though I little thought that I was translating so much money out of your pocket into the Bookseller's when I turned Prior's Poem into Latin, yet I must needs say, that if you think it worth while to purchase the English Classics at all, you cannot possess yourself of them upon better terms. I have looked into some of the Volumes, but not having yet finished the Register, have merely looked into

into them. A few things I have met with, which if they had been burned the moment they were written, it would have been better for the author, and at least as well for his readers. There is not much of this, but a little too much. I think it a pity the Editor admitted any; the English Muse would have lost no credit by the omission of such trash. Some of them again seem to me, to have but a very disputable right to a place among the Classics, and I am quite at a loss when I see them in such company, to conjecture what is Dr. Johnson's idea or definition of classical merit. But if he inserts the Poems of some who can hardly be said to deserve such an honour, the purchaser may comfort himself with the hope that he will exclude none that do.

W. C.

LETTER III.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 21, 1779.

Amico mio, be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond-pencil. I have glazed the two frames, designed to receive my pine-plants. But I cannot mend the kitchen-windows, till by the help of that implement I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber I should be a complete glazier, and possibly the happy time may come, when I shall be

scen trudging away to the neighbouring towns, with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If Government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business, in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself: A Chinese of ten times my fortune, would avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple; and why should not I, who want money as much as any Mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture, that he had found the Emilius, who (he supposed) had subsisted only in his own idea. I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church-windows; which as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in a morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast. For I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, as to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your

Your mother and I last week, made a trip in a post-chaise to Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, about four miles off. He understood, that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me, that he was going into Leicestershire, and that, if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hot-house in the most flourishing state, and the orange-trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER IV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 31, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote my last Letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say, in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now and shall hope for something in return.

I have

I have been well entertained with Johnson's Biography, for which I thank you: With one exception, and that a swinging one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good-sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. He has belaboured that great Poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of every thing royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him, and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's; was there ever any thing so delightful as the music of the Paradise Lost?

Lost? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank-verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends you.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER V.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 2, 1779.

My dear friend, how quick is the succession of human events! The cares of to-day are seldom the cares of to-morrow; and when we lie down at night, we may safely say to most of our troubles—"Ye have done your worst, and we shall meet no more."

This

This observation was suggested to me by reading your last Letter; which, though I have written since I received it, I have never answered. When that epistle passed under your pen, you were miserable about your tithes, and your imagination was hung round with pictures, that terrified you to such a degree, as made even the receipt of money burthensome. But it is all over now. You sent away your farmers in good humour, (for you can make people merry whenever you please); and now you have nothing to do, but to chink your purse, and laugh at what is past. Your delicacy makes you groan under that, which other men never feel or feel but lightly. A fly, that settles upon the tip of the nose, is troublesome; and this is a comparison adequate to the most, that mankind in general are sensible of, upon such tiny occasions. But the flies, that pester you, always get between your eye-lids, where the annoyance is almost insupportable.

I would follow your advice, and endeavour to furnish Lord North with a scheme of supplies for the ensuing year, if the difficulty I find in answering the call of my own emergencies did not make me despair of satisfying those of the nation. I can say but this: If I had ten acres of land in the world, whereas I have not one, and in those ten acres should discover a gold-mine, richer than all Mexico and Peru, when I had reserved a few ounces for my own annual supply, I would willingly give the rest to Government. My ambition would be more gratified by annihilating the national incumbrances,

incumbrances than by going daily down to the bottom of a mine, to wallow in my own emolument. This is patriotism—you will allow; but, alas, this virtue is for the most part in the hands of those, who can do no good with it! He, that has but a single handful of it, catches so greedily at the first opportunity of growing rich, that his patriotism drops to the ground, and he grasps the gold instead of it. He, that never meets with such an opportunity, holds it fast in his clenched fists, and says—"Oh, how much good I would do, if I could!"

Your mother says—"Pray send my dear love!" There is hardly room to add mine, but you will suppose it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER VI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 27, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As you are pleased to desire my Letters, I am the more pleased with writing them; though at the same time, I must needs testify my surprize that you should think them worth receiving, as I seldom send one that I think favourably of myself.

myself. This is not to be understood as an imputation upon your taste, or judgment, but as an encomium upon my own modesty and humility, which I desire you to remark well. It is a just observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that though men of ordinary talents, may be highly satisfied with their own productions—men of true genius never are. Whatever be their subject, they always seem to themselves to fall short of it, even when they seem to others most to excell. And for this reason—because they have a certain sublime sense of perfection, which other men are strangers to, and which they themselves in their performances, are not able to exemplify.—Your servant, Sir Joshua! I little thought of seeing you when I began, but as you have popped in you are welcome.

When I wrote last I was a little inclined to send you a copy of Verses, entitled the Modern Patriot, but was not quite pleased with a line or two which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not. At night I read Mr. Burke's speech, in the news-paper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and with the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my Verses. Such is the lot of the man who writes upon the subject of the day; the aspect of affairs changes in an hour or two, and his opinion with it; what was just, and well-deserved satire in the morning, in the evening becomes a libel; the author commences his own judge, and while he condemns, with unrelenting severity, what he so lately approved,

proved, is sorry to find that he has laid his leaf-gold upon touch-wood, which crumbled away under his fingers. Alas! What can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. I must do with it as I do with my linnet: I keep him for the most part in a cage, but now and then set open the door that he may whisk about the room a little, and then shut him up again. My whisking wit has produced the following, the subject of which is more important than the manner in which I have treated it seems to imply, but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling; I only premise that in a philosophical tract in the Register, I found it asserted that the glow-worm is the nightingale's proper food.*

An officer of a regiment, part of which is quartered here, gave one of the soldiers leave to be drunk six weeks, in hopes of curing him by satiety—he *was* drunk six weeks, and is so still, as often as he can find an opportunity. One vice may swallow up another, but no coroner, in the state of Ethics, ever brought in his verdict when a vice died, that it was—felo de se.

Thanks for all you have done, and all you intend; the Biography will be particularly welcome.

Yours,

W. C.

* This Letter contained the beautiful Fable of the Nightingale and the Glow-worm.

LETTER VII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

March 18, 1780.

I am obliged to you for the communication of your correspondence with ———. It was impossible for any man, of any temper whatever, and however wedded to his own purpose, to resent so gentle and friendly an exhortation as you sent him. Men of lively imaginations are not often remarkable for solidity of judgment. They have generally strong passions to bias it, and are led far away from their proper road, in pursuit of pretty phantoms of their own creating. No law ever did, or can, effect what he has ascribed to that of Moses; it is reserved for mercy to subdue the corrupt inclinations of mankind, which threatenings and penalties, through the depravity of the heart, have always had a tendency rather to inflame.

The love of power seems as natural to kings, as the desire of liberty is to their subjects; the excess of either is vicious, and tends to the ruin of both. There are many, I believe, who wish the present corrupt state of things dissolved, in hope that the pure primitive constitution will spring up from the ruins. But it is not for man, by himself man, to bring order out of confusion: The progress from one to the other is not natural, much less necessary, and

and without the intervention of divine aid, impossible; and they who are for making the hazardous experiment, would certainly find themselves disappointed.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER VIII.

To the Revd, WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 28, 1780.

My dear friend, I have heard nothing more from Mr. Newton, upon the subject you mention; but I dare say, that, having been given to expect the benefit of your nomination, in behalf of his nephew, he still depends upon it. His obligations to Mr. ———, have been so numerous, and so weighty, that, though he has, in a few instances, prevailed upon himself to recommend an object now and then to his patronage, he has very sparingly, if at all, exerted his interest with him in behalf of his own relations.

With respect to the advice, you are required to give to a young lady, that she may be properly instructed in the manner of keeping the sabbath, I just subjoin a few hints, that have occurred to me upon the occasion, not because I think you want them, but because

because it would seem unkind to withold them. The sabbath then (I think) may be considered, first, as a commandment, no less binding upon modern Christians, than upon ancient Jews, because the spiritual people amongst them, did not think it enough to abstain from manual occupations upon that day, but, entering more deeply into the meaning of the precept, allotted those hours they took from the world, to the cultivation of holiness in their own souls, which ever was, and ever will be, a duty incumbent upon all, who ever heard of a sabbath, and is of perpetual obligation both upon Jews and Christians; (the commandment, therefore, injoins it; the Prophets have also enforced it; and in many instances, both scriptural and modern, the breach of it has been punished with a providential and judicial severity, that may make by-standers tremble): secondly, as a privilege, which you well know how to dilate upon, better than I can tell you; thirdly, as a sign of that covenant, by which believers are entitled to a rest, that yet remaineth; fourthly, as the *sine-quâ-non* of the Christian character; and upon this head, I should guard against being misunderstood to mean no more than two attendances upon public worship, which is a form, complied with by thousands, who never kept a sabbath in their lives. Consistence is necessary, to give substance and solidity to the whole. To sanctify the day at church, and to trifle it away out of church, is profanation, and vitiates all. After all, I could ask my catechumen one short question—"Do you love the day or do you not?" "If you love it, you will never inquire, how far you may safely

"deprive

" deprive yourself of the enjoyment of it. If you do not love it,
" and you find yourself obliged in conscience to acknowledge it,
" that is an alarming symptom, and ought to make you tremble.
" If you do not love it, then it is a weariness to you, and you
" wish it was over. The ideas of labour, and rest, are not more
" opposite to each other, than the idea of a sabbath, and that dis-
" like and disgust, with which it fills the souls of thousands, to be
" obliged to keep it. It is worse than bodily labour."

W. C.

LTTTER IX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I never was any more than yourself, a friend to pluralities, they are generally found in the hands of the avaricious, whose insatiable hunger after preferment, proves them unworthy of any at all. They attend much to the regular payment of their dues, but not at all to the spiritual interest of their parishioners. Having forgot their duty, or never known it, they differ in nothing from the laity, except their outward garb, and their exclusive right to the desk and pulpit. But when pluralities seek the man, instead of being sought by him, and when the man

is

is honest, conscientious, and pious, careful to employ a substitute, in those respects, like himself, and not contented with this, will see with his own eyes, that the concerns of his parishes are decently and diligently administered; in that case, considering the present dearth of such characters in the ministry, I think it an event advantageous to the people, and much to be desired by all who regret the great, and apparent want, of sobriety and earnestness, among the clergy. A man, who does not seek a living merely as a pecuniary emolument, has no need, in my judgment, to refuse one because it is so. He means to do his duty, and by doing it, he earns his wages. The two rectories, being contiguous to each other, and following easily under the care of one pastor, and both so near to Stock, that you can visit them without difficulty, as often as you please, I see no reasonable objection, nor does your mother. As to the wry-mouthed sneers, and illiberal mis-constructions of the censorious, I know no better shield, to guard you against them, than what you are already furnished with, a clear and unoffended conscience.

I am obliged to you for what you said upon the subject of book-buying, and am very fond of availing myself of another man's pocket, when I can do it creditably to myself, and without injury to him. Amusements are necessary, in a retirement like mine, especially in such a sable state of mind as I labour under. The necessity

necessity of amusement makes me sometimes write verses—it made me a carpenter, a bird-cage-maker, a gardener—and has lately taught me to draw, and to draw too with such surprising proficiency in the art, considering my total ignorance of it two months ago, that when I shew your mother my productions, she is all admiration and applause.

You need never fear the communication of what you entrust to us in confidence. You know your mother's delicacy in this point sufficiently, and as for me, I once wrote a Connoisseur upon the subject of secret keeping, and from that day to this, I believe I have never divulged one.

We were much pleased with Mr. Newton's application to you for a charity sermon, and with what he said upon that subject, in his last Letter, "that he was glad of an opportunity to give you that proof of his regard."

Believe me yours,

W. C.

LETTER X.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April 16, 1780.

Since I wrote last, we have had a visit from ———. I did not feel myself vehemently disposed to

 receive

reeeive him with that complaisance, from which a stranger generally infers that he is welcome. By his manner, which was rather bold than easy, I judged that there was no occasion for it, and that it was a trifle which, if he did not meet with, neither would he feel the want of: He has the air of a travelled man, but not of a travelled gentleman; is quite delivered from that reserve, which is so common an ingredient in the English character, yet does not open himself gently and gradually, as men of polite behaviour do, but bursts upon you all at once. He talks very loud, and when our poor little robins hear a great noise, they are immediately seized with an ambition to surpass it—the increase of their vociferation occasioned an increase of his, and his in return, acted as a stimulus upon theirs—neither side entertained a thought of giving up the contest, which became continually more interesting to our ears, during the whole visit. The birds however survived it, and so did we. They perhaps flatter themselves they gained a complete victory, but I believe Mr. ——— could have killed them both in another hour.

W. C.

LETTER XI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 3, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbleing

ing employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such boluses, as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe, that I am the only man alive from whom they would be welcome, to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye at least, if not more pleasing to the taste, but my leaf-gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours, that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my Letters. I am not fond of long-winded metaphors, I have always observed, that they halt at the latter-end of their progress, and so does mine. I deal much in ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions, but such as may prevail without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them, and her praise, and my praise put together, are fame enough for me. Oh! I could spend whole days, and moon-light nights, in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they ow. If every human being upon earth, could think for one quarter of an hour, as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one could be found, from the Arctic to the Antarctic circle. At present, the difference between them and me, is greatly to their advantage. I delight in

baubles, and know them to be so, for rested in, and viewed, without a reference to their author, what is the earth, what are the planets, what is the sun itself, but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, "The maker of all these wonders is my friend!" Their eyes have never been opened, to see that they are trifles, mine have been, and will be, 'till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hot-house, rich as a West-Indian garden, things of consequence; visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains, will ever be worth a farthing; amuse myself with a green-house, which Lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back, and walk away with, and when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself—"This is not mine, 'tis a plaything lent me for the present, I must leave it soon."

W. C.

LETTER XII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 8, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My scribbling humour has of late, been entirely absorbed in the passion for landscape drawing. It is a most

most amusing art, and, like every other art, requires much practice and attention.

Nil sine multo
Vita, labore, dedit mortalibus.

Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be the reward of industry, and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind; I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing in my life; if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequences of this temperature is, that my attachment to any occupation, seldom out-lives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination, that feels the touch of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness, and fatigue. Hence I draw an unfavourable prognostic, and expect that I shall shortly be constrained to look out for something else. Then perhaps, I may string the harp again, and be able to comply with your demand.

Now for the visit you propose to pay us, and propose *not* to pay us. The hope of which plays upon your paper, like a jack-o-lantern upon the ceiling. This is no mean simile, for Virgil, you remember, uses it. 'Tis here, 'tis there, it vanishes, it returns, it dazzles you, a cloud interposes, and it is gone. However just the

the comparison, I hope you will contrive to spoil it, and that your final determination will be to come. As to the masons you expect, bring them with you—bring brick, bring mortar, bring every thing, that would oppose itself to your journey—all shall be welcome. I have a green-house that is too small, come and enlarge it; build me a pinery; repair the garden-wall, that has great need of your assistance; do any thing; you cannot do too much; so far from thinking you, and your train, troublesome, we shall rejoice to see you, upon these, or upon any other terms you can propose. But to be serious—you will do well to consider, that a long summer is before you—that the party will not have such another opportunity to meet, this great while—that you may finish your masonry long enough before winter, though you should not begin this month, but that you cannot always find your Brother and Sister Powley at Olney. These, and some other considerations, such as the desire we have to see you, and the pleasure we expect from seeing you all together, may, and, I think, ought to overcome your scruples.

From a general recollection of Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, I thought, and I remember I told you so, that there was a striking resemblance between that period, and the present. But I am now reading, and have read three volumes of Hume's History, one of which is engrossed intirely by that subject. There, I see reason to alter my opinion, and the seeming resemblance

blance has disappeared, upon a more particular information. Charles succeeded to a long train of arbitrary princes, whose subjects had tamely acquiesced in the despotism of their masters, 'till their privileges were all forgot. He did but tread in their steps, and exemplify the principles in which he had been brought up, when he oppressed his people. But just at that time, unhappily for the monarch, the subject began to see, and to see that he had a right to property, and freedom. This marks a sufficient difference between the disputes of that day, and the present. But there was another main cause of that rebellion, which, at this time, does not operate at all. The king was devoted to the hierarchy, his subjects were puritans, and would not bear it. Every circumstance of ecclesiastical order and discipline, was an abomination to them, and in his esteem, an indispensable duty, and, though at last, he was obliged to give up many things, he would not abolish episcopacy, and 'till that were done, his concessions could have no conciliating effect. These two concurring causes, were indeed sufficient to set three kingdoms in a flame. But they subsist not now, nor any other, I hope, notwithstanding the bustle made by the patriots, equal to the production of such terrible events.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 10, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If authors could have lived to adjust, and authenticate their own text, a commentator would have been an useless creature. For instance—if Dr. Bentley had found, or opined that he had found, the word *tube*, where it seemed to present itself to you, and had judged the subject worthy of his critical acumen, he would either have justified the corrupt reading, or have substituted some invention of his own, in defence of which, he would have exerted all his polemical abilities, and have quarrelled with half the literati in Europe. Then suppose the writer himself, as in the present case, to interpose, with a gentle whisper, thus—If you look again, Doctor, you will perceive, that what appears to you to be *tube*, is neither more nor less, than the simple monosyllable *ink*, but I wrote it in great haste, and the want of sufficient precision in the character, has occasioned your mistake; *you* will be satisfied, especially when you see the sense elucidated by the explanation.—But I question, whether the Doctor would quit his ground, or allow any author to be a competent judge in his own case. The world, however, would acquiesce immediately, and vote the critic useless.

James

James Andrews, who is my Michael Angelo, pays me many compliments on my success in the art of drawing, but I have not yet the vanity to think myself qualified to furnish your apartment. If I should ever attain to the degree of self-opinion, requisite to such an undertaking, I shall labour at it with pleasure. I can only say, though I hope not with the affected modesty of the above-mentioned Doctor Bentley, who said the same thing.

Me quoque dicunt
Vatem pastores. Sed non Ego credulus illis.

A crow, rook, or raven, has built a nest in one of the young elm-trees, at the side of Mrs. Aspray's orchard. In the violent storm, that blew yesterday morning, I saw it agitated to a degree, that seemed to threaten its immediate destruction, and versified the following thoughts upon the occasion.*

W. C.

LETTER XIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 8, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is possible I might have indulged myself in the pleasure of writing to you, without waiting for a

* Cowper's Fable of the Raven concluded this Letter.

Letter from you, but for a reason, which you will not easily guess. Your mother communicated to me, the satisfaction you expressed in my correspondence, that you thought me entertaining, and clever, and so forth:—Now you must know, I love praise dearly, especially from the judicious, and those who have so much delicacy themselves, as not to offend mine in giving it. But then, I found this consequence attending, or likely to attend, the eulogium you bestowed—if my friend thought me witty before, he shall think me ten times more witty hereafter—where I joked once, I will joke five times, and, for one sensible remark, I will send him a dozen. Now this foolish vanity would have spoilt me quite, and would have made me as disgusting a Letter-writer, as Pope, who seems to have thought, that unless a sentence was well turned, and every period pointed with some conceit, it was not worth the carriage. Accordingly he is to me, except in very few instances, the most disagreeable maker of epistles, that ever I met with. I was willing, therefore, to wait 'till the impression your commendation had made, upon the foolish part of me, was worn off, that I might scribble away as usual, and write my upper-most thoughts, and those only.

You are better skilled in ecclesiastical law than I am—Mrs. P. desires me to inform her, whether a parson can be obliged to take an apprentice. For some of her husband's opposers, at D———, threaten to clap one upon him. Now I think it would be rather hard,

hard, if clergymen, who are not allowed to exercise any handicraft whatever, should be subject to such an imposition. If Mr. P. was a cordwainer, or a breeches-maker, all the week, and a preacher only on Sundays, it would seem reasonable enough, in that case, that he should take an apprentice, if he chose it. But even then, in my poor judgment, he ought to be left to his option. If they mean by an apprentice, a pupil, whom they will oblige him to hew into a parson, and after chipping away the block that hides the minister within, to qualify him to stand erect in a pulpit—that indeed, is another consideration—But still, we live in a free country, and I cannot bring myself even to suspect, that an English Divine can possibly be liable to such compulsion. Ask your Uncle however; for he is wiser in these things than either of us.

I thank you for your two inscriptions, and like the last the best; the thought is just, and fine—but the two last lines are sadly damaged by the monkish jingle of *peperit* and *reperit*. I have not yet translated them, nor do I promise to do it, though at some idle hour perhaps I may. In return, I send you a translation of a simile in the Paradise Lost. Not having that Poem at hand, I cannot refer you to the book, and page, but you may hunt for it, if you think it worth your while. It begins—

" So when, from mountain tops, the dusky clouds
" Ascending, &c."

Quales aërü montis de vertice nubes
Cum surgunt, et jam Boreæ tumida ora quiérunt,
Cælum hilares abdit, spissâ caligine, vultus,
Tùm si jucundo tandem sol prodeat ore
Et croceo montes et pascua lumine tingat
Gaudent omnia, aves mulcent concentibus agros,
Balatuque ovium colles vallesque resultant.

If you spy any fault in my Latin, tell me, for I am sometimes in doubt, but as I told you when you was here, I have not a Latin book in the world to consult, or correct a mistake by; and some years have past since I was a school-boy.

An English Versification of a Thought, that popped into my head, about two months since.

Sweet stream! that winds through yonder glade—
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid!—
Silent and chaste, she steals along,
Far from the world's gay, busy throng;
With gentle, yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destin'd course:
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing, and blest, where'er she goes:
Pure-bosom'd, as that watery glass,
And Heav'n reflected in her face!

Now

Now this is not so exclusively applicable to a maiden, as to be the sole property of your Sister Shuttleworth. If you look at Mrs. Unwin, you will see, that she has not lost her right to this just praise, by marrying you.

Your Mother sends her love to all, and mine comes jogging along by the side of it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 12, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

We accept it as an effort of your friendship, that you could prevail with yourself, in a time of such terror and distress, to send us repeated accounts of your's, and Mrs. Newton's welfare; you supposed, with reason enough, that we should be apprehensive for your safety, situated, as you were, apparently, within the reach of so much danger. We rejoice that you have escaped it all, and that, except the anxiety which you must have felt, both for yourselves and others, you have suffered nothing upon this dreadful occasion. A metropolis in flames, and a nation in ruins, are subjects of contemplation, for such a mind

as

as yours, that will leave a lasting impression behind them. It is well that the design died in the execution, and will be buried, I hope, never to rise again, in the ashes of its own combustion. There is a melancholy pleasure, in looking back upon such a scene, arising from a comparison of possibilities, with facts; the enormous bulk of the intended mischief, with the abortive and partial accomplishment of it; much was done, more indeed than could have been supposed practicable, in a well-regulated city, not unfurnished with a military force for its protection. But surprise, and astonishment, seem, at first, to have struck every nerve of the police, with a palsy—and to have disarmed government of all its powers.

I congratulate you upon the wisdom, that witheld you from entering yourself a member of the Protestant association. Your friends, who did so, have reason enough to regret their doing it, even though they should never be called upon. Innocent as they are, and they who know them, cannot doubt of their being perfectly so, it is likely to bring an odium on the profession they make, that will not soon be forgotten. Neither is it possible, for a quiet, inoffensive man, to discover, on a sudden, that his zeal has carried him into such company, without being to the last degree, shocked at his imprudence. *Their* religion was an honourable mantle, like that of Elijah, but the majority wore cloaks of Guy Fawkes's time, and meant nothing so little, as what they pretended.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 18, 1780.

Reverend, and dear William, the affairs of kingdoms, and the concerns of individuals, are variegated alike with the checker-work of joy and sorrow. The news of a great acquisition in America, has succeeded to terrible tumults in London, and the beams of prosperity are now playing upon the smoke of that conflagration, which so lately terrified the whole land. These sudden changes, which are matter of every man's observation, and may, therefore, always be reasonably expected, serve to hold up the chin of despondency above water, and preserve mankind in general, from the sin, and misery, of accounting existence a burden, not to be endured—an evil, we should be sure to encounter, if we were not warranted to look for a bright reverse of our most afflictive experiences. The Spaniards were sick of the war, at the very commencement of it; and I hope, that by this time, the French themselves, begin to find themselves a little indisposed, if not desirous of peace, which that restless, and meddling temper of theirs, is incapable of desiring for its own sake. But is it true, that this detestable plot, was an egg laid in France, and hatched in London, under the influence of French corruption?—*Nam te scire, deos quoniam propiùs contingis, oportet.*

The

The offspring has the features of such a parent, and yet without the clearest proof of the fact, I would not willingly charge upon a civilized nation, what perhaps the most barbarous would abhor the thought of. I no sooner saw the surmise however, in the paper, than I immediately began to write Latin verses upon the occasion. "An odd effect," you will say, "of such a circumstance;"—but an effect nevertheless, that whatever has, at any time, moved my passions, whether pleasantly or otherwise, has always had upon me: Were I to express what I feel, upon such occasions, in prose, it would be verbose, inflated, and disgusting. I, therefore, have recourse to verse, as a suitable vehicle for the most vehement expressions, my thoughts suggest to me. What I have written, I did not write so much for the comfort of the English, as for the mortification of the French. You will immediately perceive, therefore, that I have been labouring in vain, and that this bouncing explosion is likely to spend itself in the air. For I have no means of circulating what follows, through all the French territories; and unless that, or something like it, can be done, my indignation will be entirely fruitless. Tell me how I can convey it into Sartine's pocket, or who will lay it upon his desk for me. But read it first, and unless you think it pointed enough to sting the Gaul to the quick, burn it.

In

In seditionem horrendam, corruptelis Gallicis, ut fertur, Londini nuper exortam.

Perfida, crudelis, victa et lymphata furore,
Non armis, laurum Gallia fraude petit.
Venalem pretio plebem conducit, et urit
Undique privatas patriciasque domos.
Nequicquàm conata suâ, fœdissima sperat
Posse tamen nostrâ nos superare manu.
Gallia, vana struis! Precibus nunc utere! Vinces,
Nam mites timidis, supplicibusque sumus.

I have lately exercised my ingenuity in contriving an exercise for yours, and have composed a Riddle, which, if it does not make you laugh, before you have solved it, will probably do it afterwards. I would transcribe it now, but am really so fatigued with writing, that, unless I knew you had a quinsy, and that a fit of laughter might possibly save your life, I could not prevail with myself to do it.

What could you possibly mean, slender as you are, by sallying out upon your two walking-sticks at two in the morning, into the midst of such a tumult? We admire your prowess, but cannot commend your prudence.

Our joint love attends you all, collectively and individually.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 22, 1780.

My dear friend, a word or two in answer to two or three questions of yours, which I have hitherto taken no notice of. I am not in a scribbling mood, and shall therefore make no excursions to amuse either myself or you. The needful will be as much as I can manage at present—the playful must wait for another opportunity.

I thank you for your offer of Robertson, but I have more reading upon my hands at this present writing, than I shall get rid of in a twelvemonth; and this moment recollect, that I have seen it already. He is an author that I admire much, with one exception, that I think his style is too laboured. Hume, as an historian, pleases me more.

I have read just enough of the *Biographia Britannica*, to say, that I have tasted it, and have no doubt that I shall like it. I am pretty much in the garden at this season of the year, so read but little. In summer-time I am as giddy-headed as a boy, and can settle to nothing. Winter condenses me, and makes me lumpish, and sober; and then I can read all day long.

For

For the same reasons, I have no need of the landscapes at present, when I want them I will renew my application, and repeat the description, but it will hardly be before October.

Before I rose this morning, I composed the three following Stanzas; I send them because I like them pretty well myself; and if you should not, you must accept this handsome compliment as an amends for their deficiencies. You may print the lines, if you judge them worth it.*

I have only time to add love, &c. and my two initials,

W. C.

LETTER XVIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 23, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your reflections upon the state of London, the sins and enormities of that great city, while you had a distant view of it from Greenwich, seem to have been prophetic of the heavy stroke that fell upon it just after. Man often pro-

* Verses on the burning of Lord Mansfield's House.

phecies without knowing it—a spirit speaks by him, which is not his own, though he does not at the time suspect, that he is under the influence of any other. Did he foresee what is always foreseen by him who dictates, what he supposes to be his own, he would suffer by anticipation, as well as by consequence; and wish perhaps as ardently for the happy ignorance, to which he is at present so much indebted, as some have foolishly, and inconsiderately done, for a knowledge that would be but another name for misery.

And why have I said all this? especially to you, who have hitherto said it to me—Not because I had the least desire of informing a wiser man than myself, but because the observation was naturally suggested by the recollection of your Letter, and that Letter, though not the last, happened to be uppermost in my mind. I can compare this mind of mine to nothing that resembles it more, than to a board that is under the carpenter's plane, (I mean while I am writing to you,) the shavings are my uppermost thoughts; after a few strokes of the tool, it requires a new surface, this again upon a repetition of his task, he takes off, and a new surface still succeeds—whether the shavings of the present day, will be worth your acceptance, I know not, I am unfortunately made neither of cedar, nor of mahogany, but *Truncus ficulnus, inutile lignum*—consequently, though I should be planed 'till I am as thin as a wafer, it will be but rubbish to the last.

It

It is not strange that you should be the subject of a false report, for the sword of slander, like that of war, devours one as well as another; and a blameless character is particularly delicious to its unsparing appetite. But that you should be the object of such a report, you who meddle less with the designs of government than almost any man that lives under it, this is strange indeed. It is well however, when they who account it good sport to traduce the reputation of another, invent a story that refutes itself. I wonder they do not always endeavour to accommodate their fiction to the real character of the person; their tale would then at least have an air of probability, and it might cost a peaceable good man much more trouble to disprove it. But perhaps it would not be easy to discern, what part of your conduct lies more open to such an attempt, than another, or what it is that you either say or do, at any time, that presents a fair opportunity to the most ingenious slanderer, to slip in a falsehood between your words, or actions, that shall seem to be of a piece with either. You hate compliment I know, but by your leave, this is not one—it is a truth—worse and worse—now I have praised you indeed—well you must thank yourself for it, it was absolutely done without the least intention on my part, and proceeded from a pen that as far as I can remember, was never guilty of flattery since I knew how to hold it.———He that slanders me, paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me, whiter—they both daub me, and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both—I had as lief my taylor

taylor should sew gingerbread-nuts on my coat instead of buttons, as that any man should call my Bristol stone a diamond. The taylor's trick would not at all embellish my suit, nor the flatterers make me at all the richer. I never make a present to my friend, of what I dislike myself. Ergo, (I have reached the conclusion at last) I did not mean to flatter you.

We have sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth, by this post, praying him to interfere in parliament in behalf of the poor lace-makers. I say we, because I have signed it—Mr. G. drew it up. Mr. ——— did not think it grammatical, therefore he would not sign it. Yet I think Priscian himself would have pardoned the manner for the sake of the matter. I dare say if his Lordship does not comply with the prayer of it, it will not be because he thinks it of more consequence to write grammatically, than that the poor should eat, but for some better reason.

My love to all under your roof.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 2, 1780.

Carissime, I am glad of your confidence, and have reason to hope I shall never abuse it. If you trust

trust me with a secret, I am hermetically sealed; and if you call for the exercise of my judgment, such as it is, I am never freakish and wanton, in the use of it, much less mischievous and malignant. Critics (I believe) do not often stand so clear of these vices as I do. I like your Epitaph, except that I doubt the propriety of the word *immaturus*; which (I think) is rather applicable to fruits than flowers, and except the last pentameter, the assertion it contains being rather too obvious a thought to finish with; not that I think an epitaph should be pointed, like an epigram. But still there is a closeness of thought and expression, necessary in the conclusion of all these little things, that they may leave an agreeable flavour upon the palate. Whatever is short should be nervous, masculine, and compact. Little men are so; and little poems should be so; because, where the work is short, the author has no right to the plea of weariness, and laziness is never admitted as an available excuse in any thing. Now you know my opinion, you will very likely improve upon my improvement, and alter my alterations for the better. To touch and retouch is, though some writers boast of negligence, and others would be ashamed to show their foul copies, the secret of almost all good writing, especially in verse. I am never weary of it myself, and if you would take as much pains as I do, you would have no need to ask for my corrections.

Hic

Hic sepultus est
Inter suorum lacrymas
GULIELMUS NORTHCOT,
GULIELMI et MARIÆ filius
Unicus, unicè dilectus,
Qui floris ritu succisus est semihiantis,
Aprilis die septimo,
1780, Æt. 10.

Care, vale! Sed non æternùm, care, valeto!
Namque iterùm tecum, sim modò dignus, ero.
Tum nihil amplexus poterit divellere nostros,
Nec tu marcesces, nec lacrymabor ego.

Having an English translation of it by me, I send it, though it may be of no use.

Farewel! "But not for ever," Hope replies,
Trace but his steps and meet him in the skies!
There nothing shall renew our parting pain,
Thou shalt not wither, nor I weep again.

The Stanzas that I sent you are maiden ones, having never been seen by any eye but your Mother's and your own.

If you send me franks, I shall write longer Letters—*Valete, sicut et nos valemus! Amate, sicut et nos amamus!*

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 11, 1780.

I account myself sufficiently commended for my Latin exercise, by the number of translations it has undergone. That, which you distinguished in the margin, by the title of "better," was the production of a friend, and, except that for a modest reason he omitted the third couplet, I think it a good one. To finish the group, I have translated it myself; and, though I would not wish you to give it to the world, for more reasons than one, especially lest some French hero should call me to account for it—I add it on the other side. An author ought to be the best judge of his own meaning; and, whether I have succeeded or not, I cannot but wish, that where a translator is wanted, the writer was always to be his own.

False, cruel, disappointed, stung to the heart,
France quits the warrior's for th' assassin's part,
To dirty hands, a dirty bribe conveys,
Bids the low street and lofty palace blaze.
Her sons, too weak to vanquish us alone,
She hires the worst and basest of our own.
Kneel, France! a suppliant conquers us with ease,
We always spare a coward on his knees.

I have often wondered, that Dryden's illustrious epigram on Milton, in my mind the second best that ever was made; has never been translated into Latin, for the admiration of the learned in other countries. I have at last presumed to venture upon the task myself. The great closeness of the original, which is equal in that respect, to the most compact Latin I ever saw, made it extremely difficult.

Tres tria, sed longè distantia, sæcula vates
Ostentant tribus è gentibus eximios.
Græcia sublimem, cum majestate disertum
Roma tulit, felix Anglia utrisque parem.
Partubus ex binis Natura exhausta, coacta est,
Tertius ut fieret, consociare duos.

I have not one bright thought upon the Chancellor's recovery; nor can I strike off so much as one sparkling atom from that brilliant subject. It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me; and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement; and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no other. If besides this purpose, the more desirable one of entertaining you be effected, I then receive double fruit of my labour, and consider this produce of it, as a second crop, the more valuable, because less expected. But when I have once remitted a composition to you, I have done with it. It is pretty certain, that I shall never read it or think of

it

it again. From that moment I have constituted you sole judge of its accomplishments, if it has any, and of its defects, which it is sure to have.

For this reason I decline answering the question, with which you concluded your last, and cannot persuade myself to enter into a critical examen of the two pieces upon Lord Mansfield's loss, either with respect to their intrinsic, or comparative merit, and indeed after having rather discouraged that use of them which you had designed, there is no occasion for it.

W. C.

LETTER XXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 27, 1780.

My dear friend, as two men sit silent after having exhausted all their topics of conversation; one says—"It is very fine weather,"—and the other says—"Yes;"—one blows his nose, and the other rubs his eye-brows; (by the way, this is very much in Homer's manner) such seems to be the case between you and me. After a silence of some days, I wrote you a long something, that (I suppose) was nothing to the purpose,

because it has not afforded you materials for an answer. Nevertheless, as it often happens in the case above-stated, one of the distressed parties, being deeply sensible of the awkwardness of a dumb duet, breaks silence again, and resolves to speak, though he has nothing to say, so it fares with me. I am with you again, in the form of an epistle, though considering my present emptiness, I have reason to fear, that your only joy upon the occasion will be, that it is conveyed to you in a frank.

'When I began, I expected no interruption. But if I had expected interruptions without end, I should have been less disappointed. First came the barber; who, after having embellished the outside of my head, has left the inside just as unfurnished as he found it. Then came Olney Bridge, not into the house, but into the conversation. The cause relating to it, was tried on Tuesday at Buckingham. The judge directed the jury to find a verdict favourable to Olney. The jury consisted of one knave and eleven fools. The last-mentioned followed the afore-mentioned, as sheep follow a bell-wether, and decided in direct opposition to the said judge. Then a flaw was discovered in the indictment. The indictment was quashed, and an order made for a new trial. The new trial will be in the King's Bench, where said knave and said fools will have nothing to do with it. So the men of Olney fling up their caps, and assure themselves of a complete victory. A victory will save me, and your Mother, many shillings, perhaps some

some pounds, which, except that it has afforded me a subject to write upon, was the only reason, why I have said so much about it. I know you take an interest in all that concerns us, and will consequently rejoice with us in the prospect of an event in which we are concerned so nearly.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XXII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 30, 1780.

MY DEAR SIR,

You may think perhaps that I deal more liberally with Mr. Unwin, in the way of poetical export, than I do with you, and I believe you have reason—the truth is this—If I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing before the window of a privy counsellor, or a chief justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement. The trifles I produce in this way, are indeed such trifles, that I cannot think them seasonable presents for you. Mr. Unwin himself would not be offended if I was to tell him that there is this difference between him and Mr. Newton; that

that the latter is already an apostle, while he himself is only undergoing the business of incubation, with a hope that he may be hatched in time. When my muse comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the Riddle. But least I should seem to set a value upon it that I do not, by making it an object of still further enquiry, here it comes—

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure—when taken by force.

W. C.

LETTER XXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You like to hear from me—This is a very good reason why I should write—But I have nothing to say—This seems equally a good reason why I should not—Yet if you had

had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—" Mr. Cowper you have not spoke since I came in, have you resolved never to speak again ?" It would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand; that a Letter may be written upon any thing or nothing, just as that any thing or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it; for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A Letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed, not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving, as a postillion does, having once set out, never to stop 'till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms ? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—" My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped, that the present

present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last, and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the mean time, to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people, who resembled us so little in their taste, should resemble us in any thing else. But in every thing else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly, and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk-hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of the man at least, has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear perhaps a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior, but in every other respect a modern is only an antient in a different dress.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

August 21, 1780.

The following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back-parlour, as if one of the Hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door, enquired if one of my Hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice-work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that having seen her just after she had dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler, and carrying less weight than Thomas; not expecting to see her again, but being desirous to learn, if possible,

what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt, of men, women, children, and dogs; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss—she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort—a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her, she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tan-yard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's—Sturgess's harvest-men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tan-pits full of water, and while she was struggling out of one pit and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket, to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your Letter, but such as it is I send it, presuming upon that interest which I know you take in my

my minutest concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence, a little varied—*Nihil mei a te alienum putas.*

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 3, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you are so provident, and that while you are young, you have furnished yourself with the means of comfort in old age. Your crutch and your pipe, may be of use to you, (and may they be so) should your years be extended to an antediluvian date, and for your perfect accommodation, you seem to want nothing but a clerk called Snuffle, and a sexton of the name of Skeleton, to make your ministerial equipage complete.

I think I have read as much of the first volume of the Biographia, as I shall ever read. I find it very amusing; more so perhaps than it would have been had they sifted their characters with more exactness, and admitted none but those who had, in some way or other, entitled themselves to immortality, by deserveing well of the public. Such a compilation, would perhaps have

been more judicious, though I confess it wonld have afforded less variety. The priests and the monks of earlier, and the doctors of later days, who have signalized themselves by nothing, but a controversial pamphlet, long since thrown by, and never to be perused again, might have been forgotten, without injury or loss to the national character, for learning or genius. This observation suggested to me the following lines, which may serve to illustrate my meaning, and at the same time to give my criticism a sprightlier air.

Oh fond attempt to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot!
In vain recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age;
Those twinkling, tiny, lustres of the land,
Drop one by one from fame's neglecting hand;
Lethean gulphs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burnt to cinder a stale last-year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the 'squire.
There goes the parson—Oh illustrious spark!
And there—scarce less illustrious—goes the clerk!

Virgil admits none but worthies into the Elysian fields; I cannot recollect the lines in which he describes them all, but these in particular I well remember—

Quique

Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo,
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluêre per artes.

A chaste and scrupulous conduct like his, would well become the writer of national biography. But enough of this.

Our respects attend Miss Shuttleworth, with many thanks for her intended present. Some purses derive all their value from their contents, but these will have an intrinsic value of their own, and though mine should be often empty, which is not an improbable supposition, I shall still esteem it highly on its own account.

If you could meet with a second-hand Virgil, ditto Homer, both Iliad and Odyssey, together with a Clavis, for I have no Lexicon, and all tolerably cheap, I shall be obliged to you if you will make the purchase.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 7, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As many gentlemen as there are in the world, who have children, and heads capable of reflecting on the important subject of their education, so many opinions there are

are about it; many of them just and sensible, though almost all differing from each other. With respect to the education of boys, I think they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing no doubt to a parent, to see his child already in some sort a proficient in those languages, at an age when most others are entirely ignorant of them; but hence it often happens, that a boy, who could construe a fable of Æsop, at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence, in making that notable acquisition, grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. The mind and body have, in this respect, a striking resemblance of each other. In childhood they are both nimble, but not strong; they can skip, and frisk about with wonderful agility, but hard labour spoils them both. In maturer years they become less active, but more vigorous, more capable of a fixt application, and can make themselves sport with that which a little earlier would have affected them with intolerable fatigue. I should recommend it to you, therefore, (but after all you must judge for yourself) to allot the two next years of little John's scholarship, to writing and arithmetic, together with which, for variety's sake, and because it is capable of being formed into an amusement, I would mingle geography, (a science which if not attended to betimes, is seldom made an object of much consideration;) essentially necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman, yet, (as I know

I know by sad experience) imperfectly, if at all, inculcated in the schools. Lord Spencer's son, when he was four years of age, knew the situation of every kingdom, country, city, river, and remarkable mountain, in the world. For this attainment, which I suppose his father had never made, he was indebted to a plaything; having been accustomed to amuse himself with those maps which are cut into several compartments, so as to be thrown into a heap of confusion, that they may be put together again with an exact coincidence of all their angles and bearings, so as to form a perfect whole.

If he begins Latin and Greek at eight, or even at nine years of age, it is surely soon enough. Seven years, the usual allowance for those acquisitions, are more than sufficient for the purpose, especially with his readiness in learning; for you would hardly wish to have him qualified for the University before fifteen, a period in my mind, much too early for it, and when he could hardly be trusted there without the utmost danger to his morals. Upon the whole, you will perceive that in my judgment, the difficulty, as well as the wisdom, consists more in bridling in, and keeping back, a boy of his parts, than in pushing him forward. If, therefore, at the end of the two next years, instead of putting a grammar into his hand, you should allow him to amuse himself with some agreeable writers upon the subject of natural philosophy, for another year, I think it would answer well. There is a book called

called Cosmotheoria Puerilis, there are Durham's Physico, and Astrotheology, together with several others in the same manner, very intelligible even to a child, and full of useful instruction.

W. C.

LETTER XXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 17, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You desire my further thoughts on the subject of education. I send you such as had for the most part occurred to me when I wrote last, but could not be comprised in a single Letter. They are indeed on a different branch of this interesting theme, but not less important than the former.

I think it your happiness, and wish you to think it so yourself, that you are in every respect, qualified for the task of instructing your son, and preparing him for the University, without committing him to the care of a stranger. In my judgment, a domestic education deserves the preference to a public one, on an hundred accounts, which I have neither time nor room to mention. I shall only touch upon two or three that I cannot but consider as having a right to your most earnest attention.

In

In a public school, or indeed in any school, his morals are sure to be but little attended to, and his religion not at all. If he can catch the love of virtue from the fine things that are spoken of it in the classics, and the love of holiness from the customary attendance upon such preaching as he is likely to hear, it will be well; but I am sure you have had too many opportunities to observe the inefficacy of such means, to expect any such advantage from them. In the mean time, the more powerful influence of bad example, and perhaps bad company, will continually counterwork these only preservatives he can meet with, and may possibly send him home to you, at the end of five or six years, such as you will be sorry to see him. You escaped indeed the contagion yourself, but a few instances of happy exemption from a general malady, are not sufficient warrant to conclude, that it is therefore not infectious, or may be encountered without danger.

You have seen too much of the world, and are a man of too much reflection, not to have observed, that in proportion as the sons of a family approach to years of maturity, they lose a sense of obligation to their parents, and seem at last almost divested of that tender affection, which the nearest of all relations seems to demand from them. I have often observed it myself, and have always thought I could sufficiently account for it, without laying all the blame upon the children. While they continue in their parents' house, they are every day obliged, and every day re-

minded how much it is their interest, as well as duty, to be obliging and affectionate in return. But at eight or nine years of age, the boy goes to school. From that moment he becomes a stranger in his father's house. The course of parental kindness is interrupted. The smiles of his mother, those tender admonitions, and the solicitous care of both his parents, are no longer before his eyes—year after year he feels himself more and more detached from them, 'till at last he is so effectually weaned from the connection, as to find himself happier any where than in their company.

I should have been glad of a frank for this Letter, for I have said but little of what I could say upon the subject, and perhaps I may not be able to catch it by the end again. If I can, I shall add to it hereafter.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 5, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Now for the sequel—You have anticipated one of my arguments in favour of a private education, therefore I need

need say but little about it. The folly of supposing, that the mother-tongue, in some respects the most difficult of all tongues, may be acquired without a teacher, is predominant in all the public schools that I have ever heard of. To pronounce it well, to speak and to write it with fluency and elegance, are no easy attainments; not one in fifty of those who pass through Westminster and Eton, arrive at any remarkable proficiency in these accomplishments; and they that do, are more indebted to their own study, and application for it, than to any instruction received there. In general, there is nothing so pedantic as the stile of a school-boy, if he aims at any stile at all, and if he does not, he is of course inelegant, and perhaps ungrammatical. A defect no doubt, in great measure, owing to want of cultivation, for the same lad that is often commended for his Latin, frequently would deserve to be whipped for his English, if the fault were not more his master's than his own. I know not where this evil is so likely to be prevented as at home—supposing always, nevertheless, (which is the case in your instance) that the boy's parents, and their acquaintance, are persons of elegance and taste themselves. For to converse with those who converse with propriety, and to be directed to such authors, as have refined and improved the language by their productions, are advantages which he cannot elsewhere enjoy in an equal degree. And though it requires some time to regulate the taste, and fix the judgment, and these effects must be gradually wrought even upon the best understanding, yet I suppose, much

less time will be necessary for the purpose, than could at first be imagined, because the opportunities of improvement are continual.

A public education is often recommended as the most effectual remedy for that bashful, and awkward restraint, so epidemical among the youth of our country. But I verily believe, that, instead of being a cure, it is often the cause of it. For seven or eight years of his life, the boy has hardly seen or conversed with a man, or a woman, except the maids at his boarding house. A gentleman, or a lady, are consequently such novelties to him, that he is perfectly at a loss to know what sort of behaviour he should preserve before them. He plays with his buttons, or the strings of his hat, he blows his nose, and hangs down his head, is conscious of his own deficiency to a degree, that makes him quite unhappy, and trembles lest any one should speak to him, because that would quite overwhelm him. Is not all this miserable shyness the effect of his education? To me it appears to be so. If he saw good company every day, he would never be terrified at the sight of it, and a room full of ladies and gentlemen, would alarm him no more than the chairs they sit on. Such is the effect of custom.

I need add nothing further on this subject, because I believe little John is as likely to be exempted from this weakness as most young gentlemen we shall meet with. He seems to have his father's spirit in this respect, in whom I could never discern the least trace of bashfulness, though I have often heard him complain

of

of it. Under your management, and the influence of your example, I think he can hardly fail to escape it. If he does, he escapes that which has made many a man uncomfortable for life; and ruined not a few: by forcing them into mean, and dishonourable company, where only they could be free and cheerful.

Connections formed at school, are said to be lasting, and often beneficial. There are two or three stories of this kind upon record, which would not be so constantly cited as they are, whenever this subject happens to be mentioned, if the chronicle that preserves their remembrance, had many besides to boast of. For my own part, I found such friendships, though warm enough in their commencement, surprisingly liable to extinction: and of seven or eight, whom I had selected for intimates, out of about three hundred, in ten years time not one was left me. The truth is, that there may be, and often is, an attachment of one boy to another, that looks very like a friendship, and while they are in circumstances that enable them mutually to oblige, and to assist each other, promises well, and bids fair to be lasting. But they are no sooner separated from each other, by entering into the world at large, then other connections, and new employments, in which they no longer share together, efface the remembrance of what passed in earlier days, and they become strangers to each other for ever. Add to this, that the *man* frequently differs so much from the *boy*, his principles, manners, temper, and conduct, undergo

undergo so great an alteration, that we no longer recognize in him our old playfellow, but find him utterly unworthy, and unfit for the place he once held in our affections,

To close this article, as I did the last, by applying myself immediately to the present concern—little John is happily placed above all occasion for dependence on all such precarious hopes, and need not be sent to school in quest of some great men in embryo, who may possibly make his fortune.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXIX.

To Mrs. NEWTON.

Oct. 5, 1780.

DEAR MADAM,

When a lady speaks, it is not civil to make her wait a week for an answer—I received your Letter within this hour, and foreseeing that the garden will engross much of my time for some days to come, have seized the present opportunity to acknowledge it. I congratulate you on Mr. Newton's safe arrival at Ramsgate, making no doubt but that he reached that place

place without difficulty or danger, the road thither from Canterbury, being so good as to afford room for neither. He has now a view of the element with which he was once so familiar, but which I think he has not seen for many years. The sight of his old acquaintance will revive in his mind, a pleasing recollection of past deliverances, and when he looks at him from the beach, he may say, "You have formerly given me trouble enough, but I have cast anchor now where your billows can never reach me." It is happy for him that he can say so.

Mrs. Unwin returns you many thanks for your anxiety on her account. Her health is considerably mended upon the whole, so as to afford us a hope that it will be established.

Our love attends you.

Yours, dear Madam,

W. C.

LETTER XXX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 9, 1780.

I wrote the following last summer. The tragical occasion of it really happened at the next house to ours.

ours. I am glad when I can find a subject to work upon; a lapidary I suppose accounts it a labourious part of his business to rub away the roughness of the stone; but it is my amusement, and if after all the polishing I can give it, it discovers some little lustre, I think myself well rewarded for my pains.*

I shall charge you a half-penny a piece for every copy I send you, the short as well as the long. This is a sort of after-clap you little expected, but I cannot possibly afford them at a cheaper rate. If this method of raising money had occurred to me sooner, I should have made the bargain sooner; but am glad I have hit upon it at last. It will be a considerable encouragement to my muse, and act as a powerful stimulus to my industry. If the American war should last much longer, I may be obliged to raise my price, but this I shall not do without a real occasion for it—it depends much upon Lord North's conduct in the article of supplies—if he imposes an additional tax on any thing that I deal in, the necessity of this measure, on my part, will be so apparent, that I dare say you will not dispute it.

W. C.

LETTER

* Verses on a Goldfinch, starved to death in his cage.

LETTER XXXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Poetical reports of law-cases are not very common, yet it seems to me desirable that they should be so. Many advantages would accrue from such a measure. They would in the first place, be more commodiously deposited in the memory, just as linen, grocery, or other such matters, when neatly packed, are known to occupy less room, and to lie more conveniently in any trunk, chest, or box, to which they may be committed. In the next place, being divested of that infinite circumlocution, and the endless embarrasment in which they are involved by it, they would become surprisingly intelligible, in comparison with their present obscurity. And lastly, they would, by this means, be rendered susceptible of musical embellishment, and, instead of being quoted in the country, with that dull monotony, which is so wearisome to by-standers, and frequently lulls even the judges themselves to sleep, might be rehearsed in recitation; which would have an admirable effect, in keeping the attention fixed and lively, and could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity, which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country. I remember many years ago, being informed

by a relation of mine, who in his youth had applied himself to the study of the law, that one of his fellow students, a gentleman of sprightly parts. and very respectable talents of the poetical kind, did actually engage in the prosecution of such a design; for reasons I suppose, somewhat similar to, if not the same with those I have now suggested. He began with Coke's Institutes; a book so rugged in its stile, that an attempt to polish it seemed an Herculean labour, and not less arduous and difficult, than it would be to give the smoothness of a rabbit's fur to the prickly back of a hedge-hog. But he succeeded to admiration, as you will perceive by the following specimen, which is all that my said relation could recollect of the performance.

" Tenant in fee
Simple, is he,
And need neither quake nor quiver,
Who hath his lands
Free from demands,
To him, and his heirs for ever."

You have an ear for music, and a taste for verse, which saves me the trouble of pointing out, with a critical nicety, the advantages of such a version. I proceed, therefore, to what I at first intended, and to transcribe the record of an adjudged case, thus managed, to which indeed, what I promised was intended merely as an introduction.*

W. C.

LETTER

* This Letter concluded with the poetical Law-case of Nose Plaintiff—Eyes Defendants.

LETTER XXXII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 2, 1781.

My dear friend, fine weather and a variety of *extra-foraneous* occupations, (search Johnson's dictionary for that word, and if not found there, insert it—for it saves a deal of circumlocution, and is very lawfully compounded) make it difficult (excuse the length of a parenthesis, which I did not foresee the length of, when I began it, and which may perhaps a little perplex the sense of what I am writing, though, as I seldom deal in that figure of speech, I have the less need to make an apology for doing it at present) make it difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, 'till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing. At five o'clock we walk; and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest, and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour, therefore, which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four, which is not otherwise engaged.

I do not wonder that you have felt a great deal upon the occasion, you mention in your last, especially on account of the asperity you have met with, in the behaviour of your friend. Reflect however, that as it is natural to you to have very fine feel-

ings. it is equally natural to some other tempers, to leave those feelings entirely out of the question, and to speak to you, and to act towards you, just as they do towards the rest of mankind, without the least attention to the irritability of your system. Men of a rough, and unsparing address, should take great care that they be always in the right, the justness, and propriety of their sentiments and censures, being the only tolerable apology, that can be made for such a conduct, especially in a country, where civility of behaviour is inculcated even from the cradle. But in the instance now under our contemplation, I think you a sufferer under the weight of an animadversion not founded in truth, and which, consequently, you did not deserve. I account him faithful in the pulpit, who dissembles nothing, that he believes, for fear of giving offence. To accommodate a discourse to the judgement, and opinion of others, for the sake of pleasing them, though by doing so we are obliged to depart widely from our own, is to be unfaithful to ourselves at least, and cannot be accounted fidelity to him, whom we profess to serve. But there are few men, who do not stand in need of the exercise of charity, and forbearance; and the gentleman in question, has afforded you an ample opportunity in this respect, to show, how readily, though differing in your views, you can practise all, that he could possibly expect from you, if your persuasion corresponded exactly with his own.

With

With respect to *Monsieur le Curè*, I think you not quite excusable for suffering such a man to give you any uneasiness at all. The grossness, and injustice of his demand, ought to be its own antidote. If a robber should miscall you a pitiful fellow for not carrying a purse full of gold about you, would his brutality give you any concern? I suppose not. Why then have you been distrest in the present instance?

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 1, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your Mother says I *must* write, and *must* admits of no apology; I might otherwise plead, that I have nothing to say, that I am weary, that I am dull, that it would be more convenient therefore for you, as well as for myself, that I should let it alone: But all these pleas, and whatever pleas besides, either disinclination, indolence, or necessity, might suggest, are over-ruled, as they ought to be, the moment a lady adduces her irrefragable argument, *you must.* You have still however one comfort left, that what I must write, you may, or may not read, just

as

as it shall please you; unless Lady Anne at your elbow, should say, you must read it, and then, like a true knight, you will obey without looking for a remedy.

In the press, and speedily will be published, in one volume, octavo, price three shillings, Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esqr. You may suppose, by the size of the publication, that the greatest part of them have been long kept secret, because you yourself have never seen them; but the truth is, that they are most of them, except what you have in your possession, the produce of the last winter. Two thirds of the compilation, will be occupied by four pieces, the first of which sprung up in the month of December, and the last of them in the month of March. They contain, I suppose, in all, about two thousand and five hundred lines; are known, or to be known in due time, by the names of *Table Talk—The Progress of Error—Truth—Expostulation.* Mr. Newton writes a Preface, and Johnson is the publisher. The principal, I may say the only reason, why I never mentioned to you, till now, an affair which I am just going to make known to all the world, (if *that* Mr. All-the-world should think it worth his knowing) has been this; that 'till within these few days, I had not the honour to know it myself. This may seem strange, but it is true, for not knowing where to find under-writers, who would chuse to insure them, and not finding it convenient to a purse like mine, to run any hazard, even upon the credit of my own ingenuity

genuity, I was very much in doubt for some weeks, whether any bookseller would be willing to subject himself to an ambiguity, that might prove very expensive in case of a bad market. But Johnson has heroically set all peradventures at defiance, and takes the whole charge upon himself. So out I come. I shall be glad of my Translations from Vincent Bourne, in your next frank. My muse will lay herelf at your feet immediately on her first public appearance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 10, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is Friday: I have just drunk tea, and just perused your letter; and though this answer to it cannot set off 'till Sunday, I obey the warm impulse I feel, which will not permit me to postpone the business 'till the regular time of writing.

I expected you would be grieved; if you had not been so, those sensibilities, which attend you upon every other occasion, must have left you upon this. I am sorry, that I have given you

you pain, but not sorry that you have felt it. A concern of that sort would be absurd, because it would be to regret your friendship for me, and to be dissatisfied with the effect of it. Allow yourself however, three minutes only for reflection, and your penetration must necessarily dive into the motives of my conduct. In the first place, and by way of preface, remember that I do not (whatever your partiality may incline you to do) account it of much consequence to any friend of mine, whether he is, or is not employed by me, upon such an occasion. But all affected renunciations of poetical merit apart, and all unaffected expressions of the sense I have of my own littleness in the poetical character too, the obvious and only reason, why I resorted to Mr. Newton, and not to my friend Unwin, was this;—that the former lived in London, the latter at Stock; the former was upon the spot, to correct the press, to give instructions respecting any sudden alterations, and to settle with the publisher, every thing that might possibly occur in the course of such a business;—the latter could not be applied to for these purposes, without what I thought would be a manifest encroachment on his kindness; because it might happen, that the troublesome office might cost him now and then a journey, which it was absolutely impossible for me to endure the thought of.

When I wrote to you for the copies you have sent me, I told you I was making a collection, but not with a design to publish. There is nothing truer, than that at that time, I had not the smallest

expectation

expectation of sending a volume of Poems to the press. I had several small pieces, that might amuse, but I would not, when I publish, make the amusement of the reader my only object. When the winter deprived me of other employments, I began to compose, and seeing six or seven months before me, which would naturally afford me much leisure for such a purpose, I undertook a piece of some length; that finished, another; and so on, till I had amassed the number of lines I mentioned in my last.

Believe of me what you please, but not that I am indifferent to you, or your friendship for me, on any occasion.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXXV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 23, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If a writer's friends have need of patience, how much more the writer! Your desire to see my muse

in public, and mine to gratify you, must both suffer the mortification of delay—I expected that my trumpeter would have informed the world by this time, of all that is needful for them to know upon such an occasion; and that an advertising blast, blown through every newspaper, would have said—"The Poet is comeing." But man, especially man that writes verse, is born to disappointments, as surely as printers and booksellers are born to be the most dilatory, and tedious of all creatures. The plain English of this magnificent preamble is, that the season of publication is just elapsed, that the town is going into the country every day, and that my book cannot appear till they return, that is to say, not till next winter. This misfortune however, comes not without its attendant advantage; I shall now have, what I should not otherwise have had, an opportunity to correct the press myself: no small advantage upon any occasion, but especially important, where poetry is concerned! A single erratum may knock out the brains of a whole passage, and that perhaps, which of all others the unfortunate Poet is the most proud of. Add to this, that now and then, there is to be found, in a printing house, a presumptuous intermeddler, who will fancy himself a Poet too, and what is still worse, a better than he that employs him. The consequence is, that with cobbleing, and tinkering, and patching on here and there a shred of his own, he makes such a difference between the original and the copy, that an author cannot know his own work again. Now as I chuse to be responsible for nobody's dullness but my own, I am a little

a little comforted, when I reflect, that it will be in my power to prevent all such impertinence, and yet not without your assistance. It will be quite necessary, that the correspondence between me and Johnson, should be carried on without the expence of postage, because proof sheets would make double or treble letters, which expence, as in every instance it must occur twice, first when the pacquet is sent, and again when it is returned, would be rather inconvenient to me, who, as you perceive, am forced to live by my wits, and to him, who hopes to get a little matter no doubt by the same means. Half a dozen franks, therefore, to me, and *totidem* to him, will be singularly acceptable, if you can, without feeling it in any respect a trouble, procure them for me.

I am much obliged to you for your offer to support me in a translation of Bourne. It is but seldom however, and never except for my amusement, that I translate; because I find it disagreeable to work by another man's pattern; I should at least be sure to find it so in a business of any length. Again, *that* is epigrammatic and witty in Latin, which would be perfectly insipid in English, and a translator of Bourne would frequently find himself obliged to supply what is called the turn, which is in fact the most difficult, and the most expensive part of the whole composition, and could not perhaps, in many instances, be done with any tolerable success. If a Latin poem is neat, elegant, and musical, it is enough—but English readers are not so easily satisfied. To quote myself, you

will find, in comparing the jack daw with the original, that I was obliged to sharpen a point, which, though smart enough in the Latin, would, in English, have appeared as plain, and as blunt as the tag of a lace. I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin Poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in *his* way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to *him*. I love him too with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster, when I passed through it. He was so good-natured, and so indolent, that I lost more than I got by him; for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had trusted to his genius as a cloak for every thing that could disgust you in his person; and indeed in his writings, he has almost made amends for all. His humour is entirely original—he can speak of a magpie or a cat, in terms so exquisitely appropriated to the character he draws, that one would suppose him animated by the spirit of the creature he describes. And with all his drollery, there is a mixture of rational, and even religious reflection, at times, and always an air of pleasantry, good-nature, and humanity, that makes him, in my mind, one of the most amiable writers in the world. It is not common to meet with an author, who can make you smile, and yet at nobody's expence; who is always entertaining, and yet always harmless, and who, though always elegant, and classical, to a degree not always found in the classics themselves, charms more by the simplicity, and playfulness of his ideas, than by the neatness and purity of his verse; yet

yet such was poor Vinny. I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again. Since I have begun to write long poems, I seem to turn up my nose at the idea of a short one. I have lately entered upon one, which if ever finished, cannot easily be comprised in much less than a thousand lines! But this must make part of a second publication, and be accompanied, in due time, by others not yet thought of; for it seems (what I did not know till the bookseller had occasion to tell me so) that single pieces stand no chance, and that nothing less than a volume will go down. You yourself afford me a proof of the certainty of this intelligence, by sending me franks, which nothing less than a volume can fill. I have accordingly sent you one, but an obliged to add, that had the wind been in any other point of the compass, or blowing as it does from the East, had it been less boisterous, you must have been contented with a much shorter Letter, but the abridgment of every other occupation is very favourable to that of writing.

I am glad I did not expect to hear from you by this post, for the boy has lost the bag in which your letter must have been inclosed—another reason for my prolixity!

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XXXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I believe I never give you trouble without feeling more than I give; so much by way of preface and apology!

Thus stands the case—Johnson has begun to print, and Mr. Newton has already corrected the first sheet. This unexpected dispatch makes it necessary for me to furnish myself with the means of communication, viz. the franks, as soon as may be. There are reasons, (I believe I mentioned them in my last) why I chuse to revise the proof myself—nevertheless, if your delicacy must suffer the puncture of a pin's point, in procuring the franks for me, I release you entirely from the task, you are as free as if I had never mentioned them. But you will oblige me by a speedy answer upon this subject, because it is expedient that the printer should know to whom he is to send his copy; and, when the press is once set, those humble servants of the poets, are rather impatient of any delay, because the types are wanted for other authors, who are equally impatient to be born.

This

This fine weather I suppose, sets you on horseback, and allures the ladies into the garden. If I was at Stock, I should be of their party; and while they sat knotting or netting, in the shade, should comfort myself with the thought, that I had not a beast under me, whose walk would seem tedious, whose trot would jumble me, and whose gallop might throw me into a ditch. What nature expressly designed me for, I have never been able to conjecture; I seem to myself so universally disqualified for the common, and customary, occupations and amusements of mankind. When I was a boy, I excelled at cricket and foot-ball, but the fame I acquired by atchievements that way, is long since forgotten, and I do not know that I have made a figure in any thing since. I am sure however, that she did not design me for a horseman, and that if all men were of my mind, there would be an end of all jockeyship for ever. I am rather straitened for time, and not very rich in materials, therefore, with our joint love to you all, conclude myself,

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XXXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 5, 1781.

My dear friend, if the old adage be true, that "he gives twice, who gives speedily," it is equally true, that

that he who not only uses expedition in giving, but gives more than was asked, gives thrice at least. Such is the style in which Mr. ——— confers a favour. He has not only sent me franks to Johnson, but, under another cover, has added six to you. These last, for aught that appears by your Letter, he threw in of his own mere bounty. I beg that my share of thanks may not be wanting on this occasion, and that, when you write to him next, you will assure him of the sense I have of the obligation, which is the more flattering, as it includes a proof of his predilection in favour of the Poems, his franks are destined to inclose. May they not forfeit his good opinion hereafter, nor yours, to whom I hold myself indebted in the first place, and who have equally given me credit for their deservings! Your Mother says, that, although there are passages in them containing opinions, which will not be universally subscribed to, the world will at least allow what my great modesty will not permit me to subjoin. I have the highest opinion of her judgment, and know, by having experienced the soundness of them, that her observations are always worthy of attention, and regard. Yet, strange as it may seem, I do not feel the vanity of an author, when she commends me—but I feel something better, a spur to my diligence, and a cordial to my spirits, both together animating me to deserve, at least not to fall short of her expectations. For I verily believe, if my dulness should earn me the character of a dunce, the censure would affect her more than me, not, that I am insensible of the value of a good name, either as a

man

man or an author. Without an ambition to attain it, it is absolutely unattainable under either of those descriptions. But my life, having been in many respects a series of mortifications and disappointments, I am become less apprehensive, and impressible perhaps in some points, than I should have otherwise been; and, though I should be exquisitely sorry to disgrace my friends, could endure my own share of the affliction with a reasonable measure of tranquility.

These seasonable showers have poured floods upon all the neighbouring parishes, but have passed us by. My garden languishes, and, what is worse, the fields too languish, and the upland-grass is burnt. These discriminations are not fortuitous. But if they are providential, what do they import? I can only answer, as a friend of mine once answered a mathematical question in the schools—"*Prorsùs nescio.*" Perhaps it is, that men, who will not believe what they cannot understand, may learn the folly of their conduct, while their very senses are made to witness against them; and themselves, in the course of providence, become the subjects of a thousand dispensations, they cannot explain. But the end is never answered. The lesson is inculcated indeed frequently enough, but nobody learns it. Well. Instruction, vouchsafed in vain, is (I suppose) a debt to be accounted for hereafter. You must understand this to be a soliloquy. I wrote my thoughts without recollecting that I was writing a Letter, and to you.

W. C.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 24, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The Letter you withheld so long, lest it should give me pain, gave me pleasure. Horace says, the poets are a waspish race; and from my own experience of the temper of two or three, with whom I was formerly connected, I can readily subscribe to the character he gives them. But for my own part, I have never yet felt that excessive irritability, which some writers discover, when a friend, in the words of Pope,

"*Just hints a fault, or hesitates dislike.*"

Least of all would I give way to such an unseasonable ebullition, merely because a civil question is proposed to me, with such gentleness, and by a man, whose concern for my credit and character, I verily believe to be sincere. I reply therefore, not peevishly, but with a sense of the kindness of your intentions, that I hope you may make yourself very easy on a subject, that I can perceive has occasioned you some solicitude. When I wrote the Poem called Truth, it was indispensibly necessary that I should set forth that doctrine, which I know to be true, and that I should pass what I understood to be a just censure upon opinions, and persuasions,

suasions, that differ from, or stand in direct opposition to it; because, though some errors may be innocent, and even religious errors are not always pernicious, yet in a case, where the faith and hope of a Christian are concerned, they must necessarily be destructive; and because neglecting this, I should have betrayed my subject; either suppressing what, in my judgment, is of the last importance, or giving countenance, by a timid silence, to the very evils it was my design to combat. That you may understand me better, I will subjoin—that I wrote that Poem on purpose to inculcate the eleemosynary character of the gospel, as a dispensation of mercy, in the most absolute sense of the word, to the exclusion of all claims of merit, on the part of the receiver; consequently to set the brand of invalidity upon the plea of works, and to discover, upon scriptural ground, the absurdity of that notion, which includes a solecism in the very terms of it, that man, by repentance and good-works, may deserve the mercy of his Maker.—I call it a solecism, because mercy deserved ceases to be mercy, and must take the name of justice. This is the opinion which I said in my last, the world would not acquiesce in, but except this, I do not recollect that I have introduced a syllable into any of my pieces, that they can possibly object to; and even this I have endeavoured to deliver from doctrinal dryness, by as many pretty things, in the way of trinket and plaything, as I could muster upon the subject. So that if I have rubbed their gums, I have taken care to do it with a coral, and even that coral embellished by the ribbon to

which it is tied, and recommended by the tinkling of all the bells I could contrive to annex to it.

You need not trouble yourself to call on Johnson; being perfectly acquainted with the progress of the business, I am able to satisfy your curiosity myself—the post before the last, I returned to him the second sheet of Table-Talk, which he had sent me for correction, and which stands foremost in the volume. The delay has enabled me to add a piece of considerable length, which, but for the delay, would not have made its appearance upon this occasion—it answers to the name of Hope.

I remember a line in the Odyssey, which literally translated, imports, that there is nothing in the world more impudent than the belly. But had Homer met with an instance of modesty like yours, he would either have suppressed that observation, or at least have qualified it with an exception. I hope that, for the future, Mrs. Unwin will never suffer you to go to London, without putting some victuals in your pocket; for what a strange article would it make in a newspaper, that a tall, well-dressed gentleman, by his appearance a clergyman, and with a purse of gold in his pocket, was found starved to death in the street. How would it puzzle conjecture, to account for such a phenomenon! Some would suppose that you had been kidnapt, like Betty Canning, of hungry memory; others would say, the gentleman

was

was a Methodist, and had practized a rigorous self-denial, which had unhappily proved too hard for his constitution; but I will venture to say, that nobody would divine the real cause, or suspect for a moment, that your modesty had occasioned the tragedy in question. By the way, is it not possible, that the spareness, and slenderness of your person, may be owing to the same cause? for surely it is reasonable to suspect, that the bashfulness, which could prevail against you, on so trying an occasion, may be equally prevalent on others. I remember having been told by Colman, that when he once dined with Garrick, he repeatedly pressed him to eat more of a certain dish, that he was known to be particularly fond of; Colman as often refused, and at last declared he could not: But could not you, says Garrick, if you was in a dark closet by yourself? The same question might perhaps be put to you, with as much, or more propriety, and therefore I recommend it to you, either to furnish yourself with a little more assurance, or always to eat in the dark.

We sympathize with Mrs. Unwin, and if it will be any comfort to her to know it, can assure her, that a lady in our neighbourhood is always, on such occasions, the most miserable of all things, and yet escapes with great facility, through all the dangers of her state.

Yours, *ut semper*,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 6, 1781.

We are obliged to you for the rugs, a commodity that can never come to such a place as this, at an unseasonable time. We have given one to an industrious poor widow, with four children, whose sister overheard her shivering in the night, and with some difficulty, brought her to confess, the next morning, that she was half perished for want of sufficient covering. Her said sister borrowed a rug for her at a neighbour's immediately, which she had used only one night when yours arrived; and I doubt not but we shall meet with others, equally indigent and deserving of your bounty.

Much good may your humanity do you, as it does so much good to others!—You can no where find objects more entitled to your pity, than where your pity seeks them. A man, whose vices and irregularities have brought his liberty and life into danger, will always be viewed with an eye of compassion by those, who understand what human nature is made of; and while we acknowledge the severities of the law to be founded upon principles of necessity and justice, and are glad that there is such a barrier provided for the peace of society, if we consider that the difference between

between ourselves and the culprit, is not of our own making, we shall be, as you are, tenderly affected by the view of his misery, and not the less so, because he has brought it upon himself.

I give you joy of your own hair, no doubt you are considerably a gainer in your appearance, by being *disperiwigged*. The best wig is that, which most resembles the natural hair. Why then should he, who has hair enough of his own, have recourse to imitation? I have little doubt, but that if an arm or leg, could have been taken off, with as little pain as attends the amputation of a curl or a lock of hair, the natural limb would have been thought less becoming, or less convenient, by some men, than a wooden one, and have been disposed of accordingly.

Having begun my Letter with a miserable pen, I was unwilling to change it for a better, lest my writing should not be all of a piece. But it has worn me and my patience quite out.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XL.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 12, 1781.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I am going to send, what, when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got, be verse, or not:—by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme, but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before?

I have writ Charity, not for popularity, but as well as I cou'd, in hopes to do good; and if the reviewer, should say, "to be sure, the gentleman's muse wears Methodist shoes, you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard, have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoydening play of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan to catch, if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production on a new construction: She has baited her trap, in hopes to snap all, that may come, with a sugar-plumb."——His opinion in this will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend my principal end, and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said, and

and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and, by hook, or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year.

I have heard before of a room, with a floor laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in, and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penn'd; which that you may do, ere Madam and you, are quite worn out, with jigging about, I take my leave; and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me—

W. C.

LETTER XLI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 29, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having given the case you laid before me in your last, all due consideration, I proceed to answer it, and

in order to clear my way, shall, in the first place, set down my sense of those passages in scripture, which, on a hasty perusal, seem to clash with the opinion I am going to give—"If a man smite one cheek, turn the other"—"If he take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also"—That is, I suppose, rather than on a vindictive principle, avail yourself of that remedy the law allows you, in the way of retaliation, for that was the subject immediately under the discussion of the speaker. Nothing is so contrary to the genius of the gospel, as the gratification of resentment and revenge, but I cannot easily persuade myself to think, that the Author of that dispensation, could possibly advise his followers to consult their own peace at the expence of the peace of society, or inculcate an universal abstinence from the use of lawful remedies to the encouragement of injury and oppression.

St. Paul again seems to condemn the practise of going to law, "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong, &c." but if we look again we shall find, that a litigious temper had obtained, and was prevalent among the professors of the day. This he condemned, and with good reason, it was unseemly to the last degree, that the disciples of the Prince of Peace, should worry and vex each other with injurious treatment, and unnecessary disputes, to the scandal of their religion in the eyes of the Heathen. But surely he did not mean, any more than his Master, in the place above alluded to, that the most harmless members of society should receive no

advantage

advantage of its laws, or should be the only persons in the world who should derive no benefit from those institutions, without which society cannot subsist. Neither of them could mean to throw down the pale of property, and to lay the Christian part of the world open, throughout all ages, to the incursions of unlimited violence and wrong.

By this time you are sufficiently aware that I think you have an indisputable right to recover at law, what is so dishonestly withheld from you. The fellow, I suppose, has discernment enough to see a difference between you, and the generality of the clergy, and cunning enough to conceive the purpose of turning your meekness and forbearance to good account, and of coining them into hard cash, which he means to put in his pocket. But I would disappoint him, and shew him, that though a Christian is not to be quarrelsome, he is not to be crushed—and that, though he is but a worm before God, he is not such a worm, as every selfish unprincipled wretch may tread upon at his pleasure.

I lately heard a story from a lady, who has spent many years of her life in France, somewhat to the present purpose. An Abbè, universally esteemed for his piety, and especially for the meekness of his manners, had yet undesignedly given some offence to a shabby fellow in his parish. The man, concluding he might do as he pleased with so forgiving and gentle a character, struck him on

one cheek, and bade him turn the other. The good man did so, and when he had received the two slaps, which he thought himself obliged to submit to, turned again and beat him soundly. I do not wish to see you follow the French gentleman's example, but I believe nobody, that has heard the story, condemns him much for the spirit he showed upon the occasion.

I had the relation from Lady Austen, sister to Mrs. Jones, wife of the Minister of Clifton. She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me; insomuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney. Yesterday se'nnight we all dined together in the *Spinnie*—a most delightful retirement, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, of Weston. Lady Austen's lacquey, and a lad that waits on me in the garden, drove a wheelbarrow full of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *Fête champêtre*. A board, laid over the top of the wheelbarrow, served us for a table; our dining-room was a root-house, lined with moss and ivy. At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under a great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheelbarrow served us again for a tea-table. We then took a walk into the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening, without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other. An happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of.

Yours, with our joint love,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 25, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We rejoice with you sincerely in the birth of another son, and in the prospect you have of Mrs. Unwin's perfect recovery; may your three children, and the next three, when they shall make their appearance, prove so many blessings to their parents, and make you wish that you had twice the number.—— But what made you expect daily that you should hear from me? Letter for Letter is the law of all correspondence whatsoever, and because I wrote the last, I have indulged myself for some time in expectation of a sheet from you—Not that I govern myself entirely by the punctilio of reciprocation, but having been pretty much occupied of late, I was not sorry to find myself at liberty to exercise my discretion, and furnished with a good excuse if I chose to be silent.

I expected, as you remember, to have been published last spring, and was disappointed. The delay has afforded me an opportunity to encrease the quantity of my publication by about a third; and if my muse has not forsaken me, which I rather suspect to be the case, may possibly yet add to it. I have a subject in hand,

hand, which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, but which, for want of a something, I am not able to describe, I cannot at present proceed with. The name of it is Retirement, and my purpose to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be. In the course of my journey through this ample theme, I should wish to touch upon the characters, the deficiencies, and the mistakes of thousands, who enter on a scene of retirement, unqualified for it in every respect, and with such designs as have no tendency to promote either their own happiness, or that of others. But as I have told you before, there are times when I am no more a poet than I am a mathematician, and when such a time occurs, I always think it better to give up the point, than to labour it in vain. I shall yet again be obliged to trouble you for franks. The addition of three thousand lines, or near that number, having occasioned a demand which I did not always foresee, but your obliging friend, and your obliging self, having allowed me the liberty of application, I make it without apology.

The solitude, or rather the duality of our condition at Olney, seems drawing to a conclusion. You have not forgot perhaps, that the building we inhabit consists of two mansions. And because you have only seen the inside of that part of it which is in our occupation, I therefore inform you, that the other end of it is by

by far the most superb, as well as the most commodious. Lady Austen has seen it, has set her heart upon it, is going to fit it up, and furnish it, and if she can get rid of the remaining two years of the lease of her London house, will probably enter upon it in a twelve-month. You will be pleased with this intelligence, because I have already told you that she is a woman perfectly well-bred, sensible, and in every respect agreeable; and above all, because she loves your Mother dearly. It has in my eyes, (and I doubt not it will have the same in yours) strong marks of providential interposition. A female friend, and one who bids fair to prove herself worthy of the appellation, comes, recommended by a variety of considerations, to such a place as Olney. Since Mr. Newton went, and till this lady came, there was not in the kingdom a retirement more absolutely such than ours. We did not want company, but when it came, we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened. In case of illness too, to which all are liable, it was rather a gloomy prospect, if we allowed ourselves to advert to it, that there was hardly a woman in the place, from whom it would have been reasonable to have expected either comfort or assistance. The present curate's wife is a valuable person, but has a family of her

own,

own, and though a neighbour, not a very near one. But if this plan is effected, we shall be in a manner one family, and I suppose never pass a day without some intercourse with each other.

Your Mother sends her warm affections, and welcomes into the world the new-born William.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 6, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What a world are you daily conversant with, which I have not seen these twenty years, and shall never see again! The arts of dissipation (I suppose) are no where practised with more refinement or success, than at the place of your present residence. By your account of it, it seems to be just what it was when I visited it, a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping, the rooms perhaps more magnificent, because the proprietors are grown richer, but

but the manners and occupations of the company, just the same. Though my life has long been like that of a recluse, I have not the temper of one, nor am I in the least an enemy to cheerfulness, and good humour; but I cannot envy you your situation; I even feel myself constrained to prefer the silence of this nook, and the snug fire-side in our own diminutive parlour, to all the splendour and gaiety of Brighthelmstone.

You ask me, how I feel on the occasion of my approaching publication. Perfectly at my ease. If I had not been pretty well assured before-hand, that my tranquility would be but little endangered by such a measure, I would never have engaged in it; for I cannot bear disturbance. I have had in view two principal objects; first, to amuse myself—and secondly, to compass that point in such a manner, that others might possibly be the better for my amusement. If I have succeeded, it will give me pleasure, but if I have failed, I shall not be mortified to the degree that might perhaps be expected. I remember an old adage, (though not where it is to be found) "*bene vixit, qui bene latuit,*" and if I had recollected it at the right time, it should have been the motto to my book. By the way, it will make an excellent one for Retirement, if you can but tell me whom to quote for it. The critics cannot deprive me of the pleasure I have in reflecting, that so far as my leisure has been employed in writing for the public, it has been conscientiously employed, and with a view to their ad-

vantage. There is nothing agreeable to be sure, in being chronicled for a dunce; but I believe, there lives not a man upon earth, who would be less affected by it than myself. With all this indifference to fame, which you know me too well to suppose me capable of affecting, I have taken the utmost pains to deserve it. This may appear a mystery, or a paradox in practice, but it is true. I considered that the taste of the day, is refined, and delicate to excess, and that to disgust that delicacy of taste, by a slovenly inattention to it, would be to forfeit at once all hope of being useful; and for this reason, though I have written more verse this last year, than perhaps any man in England, I have finished and polished, and touched and retouched, with the utmost care. If after all I should be converted into waste paper, it may be my misfortune, but it will not be my fault. I shall bear it with the most perfect serenity.

I do not mean to give ——— a copy, he is a good-natured little man, and crows exactly like a cock, but knows no more of verse than the cock he imitates.

Whoever supposes that Lady Austen's fortune is precarious, is mistaken. I can assure you, upon the ground of the most circumstantial, and authentic information, that it is both genteel, and perfectly safe.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 5, 1781.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I give you joy of your safe return from the lips of the great deep. You did not indeed discern many signs of sobriety, or true wisdom, among the people of Brighthelmstone, but it is not possible to observe the manners of a multitude, of whatever rank, without learning something; I mean, if a man has a mind like yours, capable of reflection. If he sees nothing to imitate, he is sure to see something to avoid; if nothing to congratulate his fellow-creatures upon, at least much to excite his compassion. There is not, I think, so melancholy a sight in the world, (an hospital is not to be compared with it) as that of a thousand persons distinguished by the name of gentry, who gentle perhaps by nature, and made more gentle by education, have the appearance of being innocent and inoffensive, yet being destitute of all religion, or not at all governed by the religion they profess, are none of them at any great distance from an eternal state, where self-deception will be impossible, and where amusements cannot enter. Some of them, we may say, will be reclaimed—it is most probable indeed that some of them will, because mercy, if one may be allowed the expression, is fond of distinguishing itself by seeking

its objects among the most desperate class; but the scripture gives no encouragement to the warmest charity, to hope for deliverance for them all. When I see an afflicted, and an unhappy man, I say, to myself, there is perhaps a man, whom the world would envy, if they knew the value of his sorrows, which are possibly intended only to soften his heart, and to turn his afflictions towards their proper centre. But when I see, or hear of a crowd of voluptuaries, who have no ears but for music, no eyes but for splendour, and no tongue but for impertinence and folly—I say, or at least I see occasion to say—This is madness—This persisted in must have a tragical conclusion—It will condemn you, not only as Christians, unworthy of the name, but as intelligent creatures—You know by the light of nature, if you have not quenched it, that there is a God, and that a life like yours, cannot be according to his will.

I ask no pardon of you for the gravity, and gloominess of these reflections, which I stumbled on when I least expected it; though to say the truth, these, or others of a like complexion, are sure to occur to me, when I think of a scene of public diversion like that you have lately left.

I am inclined to hope, that Johnson told you the truth when he said, he should publish me soon after Christmas. His press has been rather more punctual in its remittances, than it used to be; we have now but little more than two of the longest pieces, and the small ones that are to follow, by way of epilogue, to print off, and

and then the affair is finished. But once more I am obliged to gape for franks; only these, which I hope will be the last I shall want, at your's and Mr. ———'s convenient leisure.

We rejoice that you have so much reason to be satisfied with John's proficiency. The more spirit he has, the better, if his spirit is but manageable, and put under such management, as your prudence and Mrs. Unwin's, will suggest. I need not guard you against severity, of which I conclude there is no need, and which I am sure you are not all inclined to practice without it; but perhaps, if I was to whisper—Beware of too much indulgence—I should only give a hint, that the fondness of a father for a fine boy, might seem to justify. I have no particular reason for the caution, at this distance it is not possible I should, but in a case like yours, an admonition of that sort seldom wants propriety.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 26, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote to you by the last post, supposing you at Stock; but lest that Letter should not follow you to

to Laytonstone, and you should suspect me of unreasonable delay, and lest the frank you have sent me, should degenerate into waste paper, and perish upon my hands, I write again. The former Letter, however, containing all my present stock of intelligence, it it is more than possible, that this may prove a blank, or but little worthy of your acceptance. You will do me the justice to suppose, that if I could be very entertaining, I would be so, because by giving me credit for such a willingness to please, you only allow me a share of that universal vanity, which inclines every man, upon all occasions, to exhibit himself to the best advantage. To say the truth however, when I write as I do to you, not about business, nor on any subject that approaches to that description, I mean much less my correspondent's amusement, which my modesty will not always permit me to hope for, than my own. There is a pleasure, annexed to the communication of one's ideas, whether by word of mouth, or by letter, which nothing earthly can supply the place of, and it is the delight we find in this mutual intercourse, that not only proves us to be creatures intended for social life, but more than any thing else perhaps, fits us for it.—— I have no patience with philosophers—they, one and all, suppose, (at least I understand it to be a prevailing opinion among them) that man's weakness, his necessities, his inability to stand alone, have furnished the prevailing motive, under the influence of which, he renounced at first a life of solitude, and became a gregarious creature.

creature. It seems to me more reasonable, as well as more honourable to my species, to suppose, that generosity of soul, and a brotherly attachment to our own kind, drew us, as it were, to one common centre, taught us to build cities, and inhabit them, and welcome every stranger, that would cast in his lot amongst us, that we might enjoy fellowship with each other, and the luxury of reciprocal endearments, without which a paradise could afford no comfort. There are indeed, all sorts of characters in the world; there are some whose understandings are so sluggish, and whose hearts are such mere clods, that they live in society without either contributing to the sweets of it, or having any relish for them—a man of this stamp, passes by our window continually—I never saw him conversing with a neighbour but once in my life, though I have known him by sight these twelve years—he is of a very sturdy make, and has a round belly, extremely protuberant, which he evidently considers as his best friend, because it is his only companion, and it is the labour of his life to fill it. I can easily conceive, that it is merely the love of good eating and drinking, and now and then the want of a new pair of shoes, that attaches this man so much to the neighbourhood of his fellow-mortals; for suppose these exigencies, and others of a like kind, to subsist no longer, and what is there that could possibly give society the preference in his esteem? He might strut about with his two thumbs upon his hips in the wilderness, he could hardly be more silent, than he is at Olney, and for any advantage or comfort,

of friendship, or brotherly affection, he could not be more destitute of such blessings there, than in his present situation. But other men have something more than guts to satisfy; there are the yearnings of the heart, which, let philosophers say what they will, are more importunate, than all the necessities of the body, that will not suffer a creature, worthy to be called human, to be content with an insulated life, or to look for his friends among the beasts of the forest. Yourself for instance! It is not because there are no taylors, or pastry-cooks, to be found upon Salisbury Plain, that you do not chuse it for your abode, but because you are a philanthropist—because you are susceptible of social impressions, and have a pleasure in doing a kindness when you can. Now, upon the word of a poor creature, I have said all that I have said, without the least intention to say one word of it when I began. But thus it is with my thoughts—when you shake a crab-tree, the fruit falls; good for nothing indeed when you have got it, but still the best that is to be expected from a crab-tree. You are welcome to them, such as they are, and if you approve my sentiments, tell the philosophers of the day, that I have out-shot them all, and have discovered the true origin of society, when I least looked for it.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

The modest terms, in which you express yourself on the subject of Lady Austen's commendation, embolden me to add my suffrage to hers, and to confirm it by assureing you, that I think her just, and well founded in her opinion of you. The compliment indeed, glances at myself; for were you less than she accounts you, I ought not to afford you that place in my esteem, which you have held so long. My own sagacity therefore, and discernment, are not a little concerned upon the occasion, for either you resemble the picture, or I have strangely mistaken my man, and formed an erroneous judgement of his character. With respect to your face and figure, indeed, there I leave the ladies to determine, as being naturally best qualified to decide the point; but whether you are perfectly the man of sense, and the gentleman, is a question, in which I am as much interested as they, and which, you being my friend, I am of course prepared to settle in your favour. The lady (whom, when you know her as well, you will love as much as we do) is, and has been, during the last fortnight, a part of our family. Before she was perfectly restored to health, she returned to Clifton. Soon after she came back, Mr. Jones had occasion to go to London. No sooner was he gone, than

the *Chateau* being left without a garrison, was besieged as regularly as the night came on. Villains were both heard, and seen in the garden, and at the doors and windows. The kitchen-window in particular, was attempted, from which they took a complete pane of glass exactly opposite to the iron by which it was fastened, but providentially the window had been nailed to the wood-work, in order to keep it close, and that the air might be excluded; thus they were disappointed, and being discovered by the maid, withdrew. The ladies being worn out with continual watching, and repeated alarms, were at last prevailed upon to take refuge with us. Men, furnished with fire arms, were put into the house, and the rascals having intelligence of this circumstance, beat a retreat. Mr. Jones returned, Mrs. Jones, and Miss Green, her daughter, left us—but Lady Austen's spirits having been too much disturbed, to be able to repose in a place, where she had been so much terrified, she was left behind. She remains with us, 'till her lodgings at the vicarage, can be made ready for her reception. I have now sent you what has occurred of moment in our history, since my last.

I say amen with all my heart, to your observation on religious characters. Men, who profess themselves adapts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy, or jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection, should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion

religion alone, a profession is often slightly taken up, and slovenly carried on, because forsooth, candour and charity require us to hope the best, and to judge favourably of our neighbour, and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority upon this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done. Behold a Christian, a Saint, a Phœnix!—In the mean time perhaps, his heart and his temper, and even his conduct, are unsanctified; possibly less exemplary than those of some avowed infidels. No matter—he can talk—he has the Shibboleth of the true church—the bible in his pocket, and a head well-stored with notions. But the quiet, humble, modest, and peaceable person, who is, in his practice, what the other is only in his profession, who hates a noise, and therefore makes none, who knowing the snares that are in the world, keeps himself as much out of it as he can, and never enters it, but when duty calls, and even then with fear and trembling—is the Christian, that will always stand highest in the estimation of those, who bring all characters to the test of true wisdom, and judge of the tree by its fruit.

You are desirous of visiting the prisoners, you wish to administer to their necessities, and to give them instruction. This task you will undertake, though you expect to encounter many things

in the performance of it, that will give you pain. Now *this* I can understand—you will not listen to the sensibilities that distress yourself, but to the distresses of others. Therefore, when I meet with one of the specious praters above-mentioned, I will send him to Stock, that by your diffidence, he may be taught a lesson of modesty, by your generosity a little feeling for others, and by your general conduct, in short, to chatter less and to do more.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

January 5, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Did I allow myself to plead the common excuse of idle correspondents, and esteem it a sufficient reason for not writing, that I have nothing to write about, I certainly should not write now. But I have so often found, on similar occasions, when a great penury of matter has seemed to threaten me with an utter impossibility of hatching a Letter; that nothing is necessary, but to put pen to paper, and go on, in order to conquer all difficulties, that availing myself of past experience, I now begin with a most

most assured persuasion, that sooner or later, one idea naturally suggesting another, I shall come to a most prosperous conclusion.

In the last Review, I mean in the last but one, I saw Johnson's critique upon Prior and Pope. I am bound to acquiesce in his opinion of the latter, because it has always been my own. I could never agree with those who preferred him to Dryden, nor with others (I have known such, and persons of taste and discernment too) who could not allow him to be a poet at all. He was certainly a mechanical maker of verses, and in every line he ever wrote, we see indubitable marks of most indefatigable industry and labour. Writers, who find it necessary to make such strenuous aud painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic, as they are correct; but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with the most minute exactness, he had all the genius of one of the first masters. Never I believe, were such talents, and such drudgery united. But I admire Dryden most, who has succeeded by mere dint of genius, and in spite of a laziness and carelessness, almost peculiar to himself. His faults are numberless, and so are his beauties. His faults are those of a great man, and his beauties are such, at least sometimes, as Pope, with all his touching, and re-touching, could never equal. So far therefore, I have no quarrel with Johnson. But I cannot subscribe to what he says of Prior. In the first place, though

though my memory may fail me, I do not recollect that he takes any notice of his Solomon, in my mind, the best poem, whether we consider the subject of it, or the execution, that he ever wrote. In the next place, he condemns him for introducing Venus and Cupid into his love verses, and concludes it impossible his passion could be sincere, because when he would express it, he has recourse to fables. But when Prior wrote, those deities were not so obsolete as they are at present. His cotemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence, as much as we do; yet Tibullus is allowed to be the prince of all poetical inamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things, which the Doctor seems to have forgot. But what shall we say of his fusty-rusty remarks upon Henry and Emma? I agree with him, that morally considered, both the knight and his lady, are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way, that would have justified the woman had she renounced him, and the woman resolves to follow him at the expence of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him? There are few readers of poetry of either sex, in this country, who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them, who do not know, that instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it, as to have overlooked all its defects,

and

and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories, without ever feeling it a burthen. I wonder almost, that as the Bacchanals served Orpheus, the boys and girls do not tear this husky, dry, commentator, limb from limb, in resentment of such an injury done to their darling Poet. I admire Johnson, as a man of great erudition, and sense, but when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification.

The next packet I receive, will bring me, I imagine, the last proof sheet of my volume, which will consist of about three hundred and fifty pages, honestly printed. My public *entrée* therefore, is not far distant.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

January 17, 1782.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I am glad we agree in our opinion of king critic, and the writers on whom he has bestowed his animadversions. It is a matter of indifference to me whether

whether I think with the world at large or not, but I wish my friends to be of my mind. The same work will wear a different appearance, in the eyes of the same man, according to the different views with which he reads it; if merely for his amusement, his candour being in less danger of a twist from interest or prejudice, he is pleased with what is really pleasing, and is not over curious to discover a blemish, because the exercise of a minute exactness is not consistent with his purpose. But if he once becomes a critic by trade, the case is altered. He must then, at any rate, establish, if he can, an opinion in every mind, of his uncommon discernment, and his exquisite taste. This great end, he can never accomplish by thinking in the track that has been beaten, under the hoof of public judgment. He must endeavour to convince the world, that their favourite authors have more faults than they are aware of, and such as they have never suspected. Having marked out a writer universally esteemed, whom he finds it for that very reason, convenient to depreciate and traduce, he will overlook some of his beauties, he will faintly praise others, and in such a manner as to make thousands, more modest, though quite as judidicious as himself, question whether they are beauties at all. Can there be a stronger illustration of all that I have said, than the severity of Johnson's remarks upon Prior, I might have said the injustice? His reputation as an author, who, with much labour indeed, but with admirable success, has embellished all his poems with the most charming ease, stood unshaken 'till Johnson thrust his

his head against it. And how does he attack him in this his principal fort? I cannot recollect his very words, but I am much mistaken indeed, if my memory fails me with respect to the purport of them. "His words (he says) appear to be forced into their proper places: There indeed we find them, but find likewise, that their arrangement has been the effect of constraint, and that without violence, they would certainly have stood in a different order." By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curl or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing, knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar stile, is of all stiles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic, to marshall the words of it in such an order, as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness; harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for it so long, that he is an easy writer indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it, in short that his ease is not ease, but only something like it, what is it but a self-contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted, in the same sentence,

and in the same breath?—But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say, that as a nation, we are not much indebted, in point of poetical credit, to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge; and that for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon, and exhausted the labours of his office, before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them. By the way, you cannot have a book at the time you mention, I have lived a fortnight or more in expectation of the last sheet, which is not yet arrived.

You have already furnished John's memory with by far the greatest part of what a parent would wish to store it with. If all that is merely trivial, and all that has an immoral tendency were expunged from our English Poets, how would they shrink, and how would some of them completely vanish. I believe there are some of Dryden's Fables, which he would find very entertaining; they are for the most part fine compositions, and not above his apprehension; but Dryden has written few things that are not blotted here and there with an unchaste allusion, so that you must pick his way for him, lest he should tread in the dirt. You did not mention Milton's Allegro and Penseroso, which I remember being so charmed with when I was a boy, that I was never weary of them. There are even passages in the paradisiacal part of the Paradise Lost, which he might study with advantage. And to teach him, as you can, to deliver some of the fine orations made

in

in the Pandæmonium, and those between Satan, Ithuriel, and Zephon, with emphasis, dignity, and propriety, might be of great use to him hereafter. The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice, which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think too, that Thomson's Seasons might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a tendency to give his mind an observing, and a philosophical turn. I do not forget that he is but a child, but I remember that he is a child favoured with talents, superior to his years. We were much pleased with his remarks on your alms-giving, and doubt not but it will he verified with respect to the two guineas you sent us, which have made four Christian people happy. Ships I have none, nor have touched a pencil these three years, if ever I take it up again, which I rather suspect I shall not, (the employment requiring stronger eyes than mine) it shall be at John's service.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLIX.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 2, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Though I value your correspondence highly on its own account, I certainly value it the more in consi-

deration of the many difficulties under which you carry it on. Having so many other engagments, and engagments so much more worthy your attention, I ought to esteem it, as I do, a singular proof of your friendship, that you so often make an opportunity to bestow a Letter upon me: And this, not only because mine, which I write in a state of mind not very favourable to religious contemplations, are never worth your reading, but especially because while you consult my gratification, and endeavour to amuse my melancholy, your thoughts are forced out of the only channel in which they delight to flow, and constrained into another so different, and so little interesting to a mind like yours, that but for me, and for my sake, they would perhaps never visit it. Though I should be glad therefore to hear from you every week, I do not complain that I enjoy that privilege but once in a fortnight, but am rather happy to be indulged in it so often.

I thank you for the jog you gave Johnson's elbow; communicated from him to the printer, it has produced me two more sheets, and two more will bring the business, I suppose, to a conclusion. I sometimes feel such a perfect indifference, with respect to the public opinion of my book, that I am ready to flatter myself no censure of reviewers, or other critical readers, would occasion me the smallest disturbance. But not feeling myself constantly possessed of this desirable apathy, I am sometimes apt to suspect that it is not altogether sincere, or at least that I may lose it just in the moment

moment when I may happen most to want it. Be it however, as it may, I am still persuaded, that it is not in their power to mortify me much. I have intended well, and performed to the best of my ability—so far was right, and this is a boast of which they cannot rob me. If they condemn my poetry, I must even say with Cervantes, "Let them do better if they can!"—if my doctrine, they judge that, which they do not understand; I shall except to the jurisdiction of the court, and plead, *Coram non judice.* Even Horace could say, he should neither be the plumper for the praise, nor the leaner for the condemnation of his readers, and it will prove me wanting to myself indeed, if supported by so many sublimer considerations than he was master of, I cannot sit loose to popularity, which like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and is equally out of our command. If you, and two or three more, such as you, say, well done; it ought to give me more contentment, than if I could earn Churchill's laurels, and by the same means.

I wrote to Lord Dartmouth to apprize him of my intended present, and have received a most affectionate and obliging answer.

I am rather pleased that you have adopted other sentiments respecting our intended present to the critical Doctor. I allow him to be a man of gigantic talents, and most profound learning, nor have I any doubts about the universality of his knowledge. But by what I have seen of his animadversions on the Poets, I feel myself

self much disposed to question, in many instances, either his candour or his taste. He finds fault too often, like a man that having sought it very industriously, is at last obliged to stick it on a pin's point, and look at it through a microscope, and I am sure I could easily convict him of having denied many beauties, and overlooked more. Whether his judgment be in itself defective, or whether it be warped by collateral considerations, a writer upon such subjects as I have chosen, would probably find but little mercy at his hands.

No winter since we knew Olney, has kept us more confined than the present. We have not more than three times escaped into the fields, since last autumn. Man, a changeable creature in himself, seems to subsist best in a state of variety, as his proper element—a melancholy man at least, is apt to grow sadly weary of the same walks, and the same pales, and to find that the same scene will suggest the same thoughts perpetually.

Though I have spoken of the utility of changes, we neither feel, nor wish for any in our friendships, and consequently stand just where we did with respect to your whole self.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER L.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 9, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for Mr. Lowth's Verses. They are so good, that had I been present when he spoke them, I should have trembled for the boy, lest the man should disappoint the hopes such early genius had given birth to. It is not common to see so lively a fancy, so correctly managed, and so free from irregular exuberance, at so unexperienced an age, fruitful, yet not wanton, and gay without being taudry. When school-boys write verse, if they have any fire at all, it generally spends itself in flashes, and transient sparks, which may indeed suggest an expectation of something better hereafter, but deserve not to be much commended for any real merit of their own. Their wit is generally forced and false, and their sublimity, if they affect any, bombast. I remember well, when it was thus with me, and when a turgid, noisy, unmeaning speech in a tragedy, which I should now laugh at, afforded me raptures, and filled me with wonder. It is not in general, till reading and observation have settled the taste, that we can give the prize to the best writing, in preference to the worst. Much less are we able to execute what is good ourselves. But Lowth seems to have stepped into excellence at once, and to have gained

gained by intuition, what we little folks are happy, if we can learn at last, after much labour of our own, and instruction of others. The compliments he pays to the memory of King Charles, he would probably now retract, though he be a bishop, and his Majesty's zeal for episcopacy, was one of the causes of his ruin. An age or two must pass, before some characters can be properly understood. The spirit of party employs itself in veiling their faults, and ascribing to them virtues, which they never possessed. See Charles's face drawn by Clarendon, and it is an handsome portrait. See it more justly exhibited by Mrs. Macaulay, and it is deformed to a degree, that shocks us. Every feature expresses cunning, employing itself in the maintaining of tyranny—and dissimulation, pretending itself an advocate for truth.

My Letters have already apprised you of that close and intimate connexion, that took place between the Lady you visited in Queen Anne's Street, and us. Nothing could be more promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication, as if we had been born in the same house, and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and because writing does not agree with your Mother, proposed a correspondence with me. By her own desire, I wrote to her under the assumed relation of a brother, and she to me as my sister.

I thank

I thank you for the search you have made after my intended motto, but I no longer need it.

Our love is always with yourself and family.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 16, 1782.

Caraccioli says—"There is something very bewitching in authorship, and that he who has once written, will write again." It may be so—I can subscribe to the former part of his assertion from my own experience, having never found an amusement, among the many I have been obliged to have recourse to, that so well answered the purpose for which I used it. The quieting and composing effect of it was such, and so totally absorbed have I sometimes been in my rhiming occupation, that neither the past, nor the future, (those themes which to me are so fruitful in regret at other times) had any longer a share in my contemplation. For this reason I wish, and have often wished, since the fit left me, that it would seize me again; but hitherto I have

wished it in vain. I see no want of subjects, but I feel a total disability to discuss them. Whether it is thus with other writers or not, I am ignorant, but I should suppose my case in this respect, a little peculiar. The voluminous writers at least, whose vein of fancy seems always to have been rich in proportion to their occasions, cannot have been so unlike, and so unequal to themselves. There is this difference between my poetship and the generality of *them*—they have been ignorant how much they have stood indebted to an almighty power, for the exercise of those talents they have supposed their own. Whereas I know, and know most perfectly, and am perhaps to be taught it to the last, that my power to think, whatever it be, and consequently my power to compose, is, as much as my outward form, afforded to me by the same hand that makes me in any respect, to differ from a brute. This lesson, if not constantly inculcated, might perhaps be forgot, or at least too slightly remembered.

W. C.

LETTER LII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 24, 1782.

My dear friend, if I should receive a Letter from you to-morrow, you must still remember, that I am not

not in your debt, having paid you by anticipation.—Knowing that you take an interest in my publication, and that you have waited for it with some impatience, I write to inform you, that, if it is possible for a printer to be punctual, I shall come forth on the first of March. I have ordered two copies to Stock; one for Mr. John Unwin.—It is possible after all, that my book may come forth without a preface. Mr. Newton has written (he could indeed write no other) a very sensible, as well as a very friendly one; and it is printed. But the bookseller, who knows him well, and esteems him highly, is anxious to have it cancelled, and with my consent, first obtained, has offered to negociate that matter with the author. He judges, that, though it would serve to recommend the volume to the religious, it would disgust the profane, and that there is in reality, no need of any preface at all. I have found Johnson a very judicious man, on other occasions, and am therefore willing that he should determine for me upon this.

There are but few persons, to whom I present my book. The Lord Chancellor is one. I inclose in a pacquet I send by this post to Johnson, a Letter to his Lordship, which will accompany the volume; and to you I enclose a copy of it, because I know you will have a friendly curiosity to see it. An author is an important character. Whatever his merits may be, the mere circumstance of authorshisp warrants his approach to persons, whom otherwise perhaps he could hardly address without being deemed impertinent.

nent. He can do me no good. If I should happen to do him a little, I shall be a greater man than he. I have ordered a copy likewise to Mr. S.

I hope John continues to be pleased, and to give pleasure. If he loves instruction, he has a tutor who can give him plentifully of what he loves; and with his natural abilities, his progress must be such as you would wish.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LIII.

To Lord THURLOW.

(Enclosed to Mr. Unwin)

Olney, Bucks. Feb. 25, 1782.

MY LORD,

I make no apology for what I account a duty, I should offend against the cordiality of our former friendship, should I send a volume into the world, and forget how much I am bound to pay my particular respects to your Lordship upon that occasion: When we parted, you little thought of hearing from

from me again; and I as little, that I should live to write to you, still less, that I should wait on you in the capacity of an author.

Among the pieces I have the honour to send, there is one, for which I must intreat your pardon. I mean that, of which your Lordship is the subject. The best excuse I can make is, that it flowed almost spontaneously from the affectionate remembrance of a connexion that did me so much honour.

As to the rest, their merits, if they have any, and their defects, which are probably more than I am aware of, will neither of them escape your notice. But where there is much discernment, there is generally much candour; and I commit myself into your Lordship's hands with the less anxiety, being well acquainted with yours.

If my first visit, after so long an interval, should prove neither a troublesome, nor a dull one, but especially, if not altogether an unprofitable one, *omne tuli punctum.*

I have the honour to be, though with very different impressions of some subjects, yet with the same sentiments of affection and esteem as ever, your Lordship's faithful, and most obedient, humble servant,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

February 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I inclose Johnson's Letter upon the subject of the preface, and would send you my reply to it if I had kept a copy. This however was the purport of it. That Mr. ———, whom I described, as you described him to me, had made a similar objection, but that being willing to hope that two or three pages of sensible matter, well expressed, might possibly go down, though of a religious cast, I was resolved to believe him mistaken, and to pay no regard to it. That *his* judgment however, who by his occupation is bound to understand what will promote the sale of a book, and what will hinder it, seemed to deserve more attention. That therefore, according to his own offer, written on a small slip of paper now lost, I should be obliged to him if he would state his difficulties to you; adding, that I need not inform *him*, who is so well acquainted with you, that he would find you easy to be persuaded to sacrifice, if necessary, what you had written, to the interests of the book. I find he has had an interview with you upon the occasion, and your behaviour in it has verified my prediction. What course he determines upon, I do not know, nor am I at all anxious about it. It is impossible for me however,

to

to be so insensible of your kindness in writing the preface, as not to be desirous of defying all contingences, rather than entertain a wish to suppress it. It will do me honour in the eyes of those whose good opinion is indeed an honour, and if it hurts me in the estimation of others, I cannot help it; the fault is neither yours nor mine, but theirs. If a minister's is a more splendid character than a poet's, and I think nobody that understands their value can hesitate in deciding that question, then undoubtedly the advantage of having our names united in the same volume, is all on my side.

We thank you for the Fast-sermon. I had not read two pages before I exclaimed—the man has read Expostulation. But though there is a strong resemblance between the two pieces, in point of matter, and sometimes the very same expressions are to be met with, yet I soon recollected, that on such a theme, a striking coincidence of both might happen without a wonder. I doubt not that it is the production of an honest man, it carries with it an air of sincerity and zeal, that is not easily counterfeited. But though I can see no reason, why kings should not sometimes hear of their faults, as well as other men, I think I see many good ones why they should not be reproved so publicly. It can hardly be done with that respect which is due to their office, on the part of the author, or without encouraging a spirit of unmannerly censure in his readers. His Majesty too perhaps might answer—my own personal

sonal feelings. and offences, I am ready to confess, but where I to follow your advice, and cashier the profligate from my service, where must I seek men of faith, and true Christian piety, qualified by nature and by education, to succeed them? Business must be done, men of business alone can do it, and good men are rarely found, under that description. When Nathan reproved David, he did not employ an herald, or accompany his charge with the sound of the trumpet; nor can I think the writer of this sermon quite justifiable in exposing the king's faults in the sight of the people.

Your answer respecting Ætna is quite satisfactory, and gives me much pleasure. I hate altering, though I never refuse the task when propriety seems to enjoin it; and an alteration in this instance, if I am not mistaken, would have been singularly difficult. Indeed, when a piece has been finished two or three years, and an author finds occasion to amend, or make an addition to it, it is not easy to fall upon the very vein from which he drew his ideas in the first instance, but either a different turn of thought or expression, will betray the patch, and convince a reader of discernment, that it has been cobbled and varnished.

Our love to you both, and to the young Euphrosyne; the old lady of that name being long since dead, if she pleases she shall fill her vacant office, and be my muse hereafter.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

March 6, 1782.

Is peace the nearer because our patriots have resolved that it is desirable? Will the victory they have gained in the House of Commons be attended with any other? Do they expect the same success on other occasions, and having once gained a majority, are they to be the majority for ever?—These are the questions we agitate by the fire-side in an evening, without being able to come to any certain conclusion, partly I suppose, because the subject is in itself uncertain, and partly because we are not furnished with the means of understanding it. I find the politics of times past, far more intelligible than those of the present. Time has thrown light upon what was obscure, and decided what was ambiguous. The characters of great men, which are always mysterious while they live, are ascertained by the faithful historian, and sooner or later receive their wages of fame or infamy, according to their true deserts. How have I seen sensible and learned men, burn incense to the memory of Oliver Cromwell, ascribing to him, as the greatest hero in the world, the dignity of the British Empire, during the interregnum. A century past before that idol, which seemed to be of gold, was proved to be a wooden one. The fallacy however was at length detected, and the honour

of that detection has fallen to the share of a woman. I do not know whether you have read Mrs. Macaulay's history of that period. She has handled him more roughly than the Scots did at the battle of Dunbar. He would have thought it little worth his while to have broken through all obligations divine and human, to have wept crocodile's tears, and wrapt himself up in the obscurity of speeches that nobody could understand, could he have foreseen that in the ensuing century, a lady's scissars would clip his laurels close, and expose his naked villany to the scorn of all posterity. This however has been accomplished, and so effectually, that I suppose it is not in the power of the most artificial management to make them grow again. Even the sagacious of mankind are blind, when Providence leaves them to be deluded; so blind, that a tyrant shall be mistaken for a true patriot: true patriots (such were the Long Parliament) shall be abhorred as tyrants, and almost a whole nation shall dream that they have the full enjoyment of liberty, for years after such a complete knave as Oliver shall have stolen it completely from them. I am indebted for all this show of historical knowledge to Mr. Bull, who has lent me five volumes of the work I mention. I was willing to display it while I have it; in a twelvemonth's time, I shall remember almost nothing of the matter.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 7, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have great pleasure in the contemplation of your Northern journey, as it promises us a sight of you and yours by the way, and are only sorry Miss Shuttleworth cannot be of the party. A line to ascertain the hour, when we may expect you, by the next preceding post will be welcome.

It is not much for my advantage, that the printer delays so long to gratify your expectation. It is a state of mind, that is apt to tire and disconcert us; and there are but few pleasures, that make us amends for the pain of repeated disappointment. I take it for granted you have not received the volume, not having received it myself, nor indeed heard from Johnson, since he fixed the first of the month for its publication.

What a medley are our public prints, half the page filled with the ruin of the country, and the other half filled with the vices and pleasures of it—here an island taken and there a new comedy—here an empire lost, and there an Italian opera, or a Lord's rout on a sunday!

"May it please your Lordship! I am an Englishman, and "must stand or fall with the nation. Religion, its true palladium, "has been stolen away; and it is crumbling into dust. Sin ruins "us, the sins of the great especially, and of their sins especially "the violation of the sabbath, because it is naturally productive of "all the rest. If you wish well to our arms, and would be glad to "see the kingdom, emerging again from her ruins, pay more re- "spect to an ordinance, that deserves the deepest! I do not say "pardon this short remonstrance!"—The concern I feel for my "country, and the interest I have in its prosperity, gave me a right "to make it. I am &c."

Thus one might write to his Lordship, and (I suppose) might be as profitably employed in whistling the tune of an old ballad.

I have no copy of the preface, nor do I know at present, how Johnson and Mr. Newton have settled it. In the matter of it there was nothing offensively peculiar. But it was thought too pious.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LVII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

March 14, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I can only repeat what I said some time since, that the world is grown more foolish and careless than it was when I had the honour of knowing it. Though your preface was of a serious cast, it was yet free from every thing that might with propriety expose it to the charge of Methodism, being guilty of no offensive peculiarities, nor containing any of those obnoxious doctrines, at which the world is so apt to be angry, and which we must give her leave to be angry at, because we know she cannot help it. It asserted nothing more than every rational creature must admit to be true—"that divine and earthly things can no longer stand in competition with each other, in the judgment of any man, than while he continues ignorant of their respective value, and that the moment the eyes are opened, the latter are always cheerfully relinquished for the sake of the former." Now I do most certainly remember the time when such a proposition as this would have been at least supportable, and when it would not have spoiled the market of any volume to which it had been prefixed, ergo—the times are altered for the worse.

I have

I have reason to be very much satisfied with my publisher—he marked such lines as did not please him, and as often as I could, I paid all possible respect to his animadversions. You will accordingly find, at least if you recollect how they stood in the MS. that several passages are better for having undergone his critical notice. Indeed I do not know where I could have found a bookseller who could have pointed out to me my defects with more discernment, and as I find it is a fashion for modern bards, to publish the names of the literati, who have favoured their works with a revisal, would myself most willingly have acknowledged my obligations to Johnson, and so I told him. I am to thank you likewise, and ought to have done it in the first place, for having recommended to me the suppression of some lines, which I am now more than ever convinced would at least have done me no honour.

W. C.

LETTER LVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 18, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nothing has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favourable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commendation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I should

should find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbours in this place, who say they like it—doubtless I had rather they should, than that they should not—but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry, than skill in the mathematics, their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner, in which it had affected *you*. It was tickled, and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper, that others perhaps, of whose taste and judgment I had an high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel, I wish to please all—as an author, I am perfectly indifferent to the judgement of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance however, in your Letter, which pleased me most, was, that you wrote in high spirits, and though you said much, suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy—my delicacy is obliged to you—but you observe it is not so squeamish, but that after it has feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable desert in the contemplation of praise implied. I now feel as if I should be glad to begin another volume, but from the will to the power is a step too wide for me to take at present, and the season of the year brings with it so many avocations into the garden, where I am my own *fac-totum*, that I have little or no leisure for the quill. I should do myself much wrong, were I to omit mentioning the great complacency with which I read your narrative of Mrs. Unwin's smiles and tears—persons of much sensibility, are always persons of taste,

and

and a taste for poetry depends indeed upon that very article, more than upon any other. If she had Aristotle by heart, I should not esteem her judgment so highly were she defective in point of feeling, as I do, and must esteem it, knowing her to have such feelings as Aristotle could not communicate, and as half the readers in the world are destitute of. This it is that makes me set so high a price upon your Mother's opinion. She is a critic by nature, and not by rule, and has a preception of what is good or bad in composition, that I never knew deceive her, insomuch, that when two sorts of expression have pleaded equally for the precedence, in my own esteem, and I have referred, as in such cases I always did, the decision of the point to her, I never knew her at a loss for a just one.

Whether I shall receive any answer from his Chancellorship or not, is at present *in ambiguo*, and will probably continue in the same state of ambiguity much longer. He is so busy a man, and at this time, if the papers may be credited, so particularly busy, that I am forced to mortify myself with the thought, that both my Book, and my Letter, may be thrown into a corner as too insignificant for a statesman's notice, and never found 'till his executor finds them. This affair however is neither at my libitum nor his. I have sent him the truth. He that put it into the heart of a certain Eastern Monarch, to amuse himself one sleepless night, with listening to the records of his kingdom, is able to give birth to such another

another occasion, and inspire his Lordship with a curiosity to know what he has received from a friend he once loved and valued. If an answer comes however, you shall not long be a stranger to the contents of it.

I have read your letter to their worships, and much approve of it. May it have the effect it ought! If not, still you have acted an humane and becoming part, and the poor aching toes and fingers of the prisoners, will not appear in judgment against you. I have made a slight alteration in the last sentence, which perhaps you will not disapprove.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 1, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I could not have found a better trumpeter. Your zeal to serve the interest of my volume, together with your extensive acquaintance, qualify you perfectly for that most useful office. Methinks I see you with the long tube at your mouth, proclaiming to your numerous connexions, my poetical merits, and at proper intervals levelling it at Olney, and pouring into my ear, the welcome sound of their approbation. I need not

 encourage

encourage you to proceed, your breath will never fail in such a cause; and thus encouraged, I myself perhaps may proceed also, and when the versifying fit returns, produce another volume. Alas! we shall never receive such commendations from him on the woolsack, as your good friend has lavished upon us. Whence I learn, that however important I may be in my own eyes, I am very insignificant in his. To make me amends however, for this mortification, Mr. Newton tells me, that my book is likely to run, spread, and prosper, that the grave cannot help smiling, and the gay are struck with the truth of it: and that it is likely to find its way into his Majesty's hands, being put into a proper course for that purpose. Now if the King should fall in love with my muse, and with you for her sake, such an event would make us ample amends for the Chancellor's indifference, and you might be the first divine that ever reached a mitre, from the shoulders of a poet. But (I believe) we must be content, I with my gains, if I gain any thing, and you with the pleasure of knowing, that I am a gainer.

We laughed heartily at your answer to little John's question; and yet I think you might have given him a direct answer—"There "are various sorts of cleverness, my dear—I do not know that "mine lies in the poetical way, but I can do ten times more to-"wards the entertainment of company in the way of conversation, "than our friend at Olney. He can rhyme, and I can rattle. If

"he

" he had my talent, or I had his, we should be too charming, and " the world would almost adore us."

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 27, 1782.

My dear William, a part of Lord Harrington's new-raised corps, have taken up their quarters at Olney, since you left us. They have the regimental music with them. The men have been drawn up this morning, upon the Market-hill; and a concert, such as we have not heard these many years, has been performed at no great distance from our window. Your Mother and I both thrust our heads into the coldest east-wind that ever blew in April, that we might hear them to greater advantage. The band acquitted themselves with taste and propriety, not *blair-ing*, like trumpeters at a fair, but producing gentle and elegant symphony, such as charmed our ears, and convinced us, that no length of time can wear out a taste for harmony, and that though plays, balls, and masquerades, have lost all their power to please us, and we should find them not only insipid, but insupportable, yet sweet music is sure to find a corresponding faculty in the soul, a sensibility, that lives to the last, which even religion itself does not extinguish.

When we objected to your coming for a single night, it was only in the way of argument, and in hopes to prevail on you to contrive a longer abode with us. But rather than not see you at all, we should be glad of you though but for an hour. If the paths should be clean enough, and we are able to walk, (for you know, we cannot ride) we will endeavour to meet you in Weston-Park. But I mention no particular hour, that I may not lay you under a supposed obligation to be punctual, which might be difficult at the end of so long a journey. Only if the weather be favourable you shall find us there in the evening. It is winter in the South. Perhaps therefore it may be spring at least, if not summer, in the North. For I have read, that it is warmest in Greenland, when it is coldest here. Be that as it may, we may hope at the latter-end of such an April, that the first change of wind will improve the season.

The curate's simile Latinized—

Sors adversa gerit stimulum, sed tendit et alas.
Pungit, api similis, sed, velut ista, fugit.

What a dignity there is in the Roman language; and what an idea it gives us of the good sense, and masculine mind of the people, that spoke it! The same thought, which, clothed in English, seems childish, and even foolish, assumes a different air in Latin, and makes at least as good an epigram as some of Martial's.

I remember

I remember your making an observation, when here, on the subject of parenthesis, to which I acceded without limitation. But a little attention will convince us both, that they are not to be universally condemned. When they abound, and when they are long, they both embarrass the sense, and are a proof that the writer's head is cloudy, that he has not properly arranged his matter; or is not well skilled in the graces of expression. But as parenthesis is ranked by grammarians, among the figures of rhetoric, we may suppose they had a reason for conferring that honour upon it. Accordingly we shall find, that in the use of some of our finest writers, as well as in the hands of the ancient poets, and orators, it has a peculiar elegance, and imparts a beauty, which the period would want without it.

> " *Hoc nemus, hunc* " *(inquit)* " *frondoso vertice collem*
> " *(Quis deus incertum est) habitat deus.*"
>
> Vir. Æn. 8.

In this instance, the first, that occurred, it is graceful. I have not time to seek for more, nor room to insert them. But your own observation (I believe) will confirm my opinion.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 27, 1802.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Rather ashamed of having been at all dejected by the censure of the Critical Reviewers, who certainly could not read without prejudice, a book replete with opinions and doctrines, to which they cannot subscribe, I have at present no little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my vanity lest it should be too much flattered by the following eulogium. I send it you for the reasons I gave, when I imparted to you some other anecdotes of a similar kind, while we were together. Our interests in the success of this same volume, are so closely united, that you *must* share with me in the praise or blame that attends it; and sympathizing with me under the burthen of injurious treatment, have a right to enjoy with me the cordials I now and then receive, as I happen to meet with more favourable and candid judges.

A merchant, a friend of ours, (you will soon guess him) sent my Poems to one of the first philosophers, one of the most eminent literary characters, as well as one of the most important in the political world, that the present age can boast of. Now perhaps your conjecturing faculties are puzzled, and you begin to ask "who, where, and what is he? speak out, for I am all impatience." I will not

not say a word more, the letter in which he returned his thanks for the present, shall speak for him.*

We may now treat the critics as the Archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons—His Grace gave him a kick and said, begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it.

We are glad that you are safe at home again, could we see at one glance of the eye, what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified, and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should indeed find reason enough to be thankful for journies performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers, we are not perhaps even permitted to see. When in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close by his side, and which but for the lightning, he must have run foul of, both the danger and the transient light that showed it, were undoubtedly designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils of which he had notice, but from many more of which he had no information, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingences may nevertheless take place! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that steering

* Here Cowper transcribed the Letter written from Passy, by the American Ambassador Franklin, in praise of his Book, and printed in the first volume of his Life, page 131.

steering contrary courses, from parts of the world so immensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea, where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another! Yet this must have happened but for the remarkable interference which he has recorded. The same Providence indeed might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other that they should never have met at all, but then this lesson would have been lost, at least the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe without having had occasion to relate an inciden tthat so naturally suggests it.

I am no more delighted with the season than you are. The absence of the sun, which has graced the spring with much less of his presence than he vouchsafed to the winter, has a very uncomfortable effect upon my frame, I feel an invincible aversion to employment, which I am yet constrained to fly to as my only remedy against something worse. If I do nothing I am dejected, if I do any thing I am weary, and that weariness is best described by the word lassitude, which of all wearinesses in the world is the most oppressive. But enough of myself. and the weather.—The blow we have struck in the West-Indies will, I suppose, be decisive at least for the present year, and so far as that part of our possessions is concerned in the present conflict. But the newswriters, and their correspondents, disgust me, and make me sick.

One

One victory after such a long series of adverse occurrences, has filled them with self-conceit, and impertinent boasting, and while Rodney is almost accounted a Methodist, for ascribing his success to Providence, men who have renounced all dependece upon such a friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the Fench out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it; but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key, and no doubt wherever our papers go shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true-glory should be to do his business well, and say little about it; but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

W. C.

LETTER LXII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 12, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Every extraordinary occurrence in our lives, affords us an opportunity to learn, if we will, something more of our own hearts, and tempers, than we were before aware of. It is easy to promise ourselves before hand, that our conduct shall be wise or moderate, or resolute, on any given occasion. But

when that occasion occurs, we do not always find it easy to make good the promise: such a difference there is between theory and practice. Perhaps this is no new remark. but it is not a whit the worse for being old if it be true.

Before I had published, I said to myself—you and I, Mr. Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics may say of our book. But having once sent my wits for a venture, I soon became anxious about the issue, and found that I could not be satisfied with a warm place in my own good graces, unless my friends were pleased with me as much as I pleased myself. Meeting with their approbation, I began to feel the workings of ambition. It is well, said I, that my friends are pleased, but friends are sometimes partial, and mine, I have reason to think, are not altogether free from bias. Methinks I should like to hear a stranger or two speak well of me. I was presently gratified by the approbation of the London Magazine, and the Gentleman's, particularly by that of the former, and by the plaudit of Dr. Franklin. By the way, magazines are publications we have but little respect for, 'till we ourselves are chronicled in them, and then they assume an importance in our esteem, which before we could not allow them. But the Monthly Review, the most formidable of all my judges is still behind. What will that critical Rhadamanthus say, when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award. Alas!

when

when I wish for a favourable sentence from that quarter (to confess a weakness that I should not confess to all) I feel myself not a little influenced by a tender regard to my reputation here, even among my neighbours at Olney. Here are watch-makers, who themselves are wits, and who, at present, perhaps think me one. Here is a carpenter, and a baker, and not to mention others, here is your idol Mr. ———, whose smile is fame. All these read the Monthly Review, and all these will set me down for a dunce, if those terrible critics show them the example. But oh! wherever else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let me pass for a genius at Olney!

We are sorry for little William's illness. It is however the privilege of infancy to recover almost immediately, what it has lost by sickness. We are sorry too for Mr. ———'s dangerous condition. But he that is well prepared for the great journey, cannot enter on it too soon for himself, though his friends will weep at his departure.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 16, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Though some people pretend to be clever in the way of prophetical forecast, and to have a peculiar talent of

sagacity, by which they can divine the meaning of a providential dispensation, while its consequences are yet in embryo—I do not. There is at this time to be found I suppose, in the cabinet, and in both houses, a greater assemblage of able men, both as speakers and counsellors, than ever were cotemporary in the same land. A man, not accustomed to trace the workings of Providence, as recorded in scripture, and that has given no attention to this particular subject, while employed in the study of profane history, would assert boldly, that it is a token for good, that much may be expected from them, and that the country, though heavily afflicted, is not yet to be despaired of, distinguished as she is, by so many characters of the highest class. Thus he would say, and I do not deny that the event might justify his skill in prognostics. 'God works by means, and in a case of great national perplexity and distress, wisdom and political ability, seem to be the only natural means of deliverance. But a mind more religiously inclined, and perhaps a little tinctured with melancholy, might with equal probability of success, hazard a conjecture directly opposite.—Alas! what is the wisdom of man, especially when he trusts in it as the only God of his confidence?—When I consider the general contempt that is poured upon all things sacred, the profusion, the dissipation, the knavish cunning of some, the rapacity of others, and the impenitence of all, I am rather inclined to fear that God, who honours himself by bringing human glory to shame, and by disappointing the expectations of those whose trust is in creatures, has signalized the present day as a day of much human sufficiency and strength,

has

has brought together from all quarters of the land, the most illustrious men to be found in it, only that he may prove the vanity of idols, and that when a great empire is falling, and he has pronounced a sentence of ruin against it, the inhabitants, be they weak or strong, wise or foolish, must fall with it. I am the rather confirmed in this persuasion, by observing that these luminaries of the state, had no sooner fixed themselves in the political heaven, than the fall of the brightest of them shook all the rest. The arch of their power was no sooner struck, than the key-stone slipt out of its place, those that were closest in connexion with it followed, and the whole building, new as it is, seems to be already a ruin.—If a man should hold this language, who could convict him of absurdity? The Marquis of Rockingham is minister—all the world rejoices, anticipating success in war, and a glorious peace.—The Marquis of Rockingham is dead—all the world is afflicted, and relapses into its former despondence.——What does this prove, but that the Marquis was their Almighty, and that now he is gone, they know no other? But let us wait a little, they will find another——Perhaps the Duke of Portland, or perhaps the unpopular ———, whom they now represent as a devil, may obtain that honour. Thus God is forgot, and when he is, his judgments are generally his remembrancers.

How shall I comfort you upon the subject of your present distress? Pardon me that I find myself obliged to smile at it, because who but yourself would be distressed upon such an occasion? You have behaved politely, and like a gentleman,

man, you have hospitably offered your house to a stranger, who could not, in your neighbonrhood at least, have been comfortably accommodated any where else. He by neither refusing nor accepting an offer, that did him too much honour, has disgraced himself but not you. I think for the future you must be more cautious of laying yourself open to a stranger, and never again expose yourself to incivilities from an Archdeacon you are not acquainted with.

Though I did not mention it, I felt with you what you suffered by the loss of Miss ———, I was only silent because I could minister no consolation to you on such a subject, but what I knew your mind to be already stored with. Indeed the application of comfort in such cases, is a nice business, and perhaps when best managed, might as well be let alone. I remember reading many years ago, a long treatise on the subject of consolation, writen in French, the author's name I forgot, but I wrote these words in the margin—Special consolation! at least for a Frenchman, who is a creature the most easily comforted of any in the world.

We are as happy in Lady Austen, and she in us, as ever—having a lively imagination, and being passionately desirous of consolidating all into one family (for she has taken her leave of London) she has just sprung a project which serves at least to amuse us, and to make us laugh—it is to hire Mr. Small's house, on the top of Clifton-hill, which is large, commodious, and handsome, will hold us conveniently, and any friends who may occasionally favour us with

with a visit—the house is furnished, but if it can be hired without the furniture will let for a trifle—your sentiments if you please upon this *demarche.*

I send you my last frank—our best love attends you individually, and altogether. I give you joy of a happy change in the season, and myself also. I have filled four sides in less time than two would have cost me a week ago—such is the effect of sunshine upon such a butterfly as I am.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 3, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Entertaining some hope, that Mr. Newton's next Letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your enquiry on the subject of Doctor Johnson's opinion, I have 'till now delayed my answer to your last; but the information is not yet come, Mr. Newton having intermitted a week more than usual, since his last writing. When I receive it, favourable or not, it shall be communicated to you; but I am not over sanguine in my expectations from that quarter: very learned, and very critical heads, are hard to please, he may perhaps treat me with lenity for the

the sake of the subject and design, but the composition I think, will hardly escape his censure. But though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry except the Night-Thoughts, which on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship, he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was however prevailed upon, and read me several times over, so that if my volume had sailed with him instead of Doctor Young's, I perhaps might have occupied that shelf in his memory, which he then allotted to the Doctor.

It is a sort of paradox, but it is true. We are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure, than when we seem perhaps to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction, were lately verified in my experience—passing from the green-house to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with a fixt attention on something which lay on the threshold of a door nailed up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—a viper! the largest that I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforesaid hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and re-

returning

turning in a few seconds missed him: he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still however the kitten sat watching immoveably upon the same spot. I concluded therefore, that sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore-foot, with her claws however sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophic enquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the outhouses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Our proposed removal to Mr. Small's, was, as you suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability,

that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects, which people of lively imaginations play with, and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has therefore no longer any connection with the great city, and no house but at Olney. Her abode is to be at the vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture, and which she will occupy as soon as the minister's wife has produced another child, which is expected to make its entry in October.

Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French Poetry, composed by Madame Guion—a quietist, say you, and a fanatic, I will have nothing to do with her—'Tis very well, you are welcome to have nothing to do with her, but in the mean time her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable; there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason, in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations 'till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passion-

ate

ate admirer, rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 4, 1782.

My dear friend, you are too modest; though your last consisted of three sides only, I am certainly a Letter in your debt. It is possible, that this present writing may prove as short. Yet, short as it may be, it will be a Letter, and make me creditor, and you my debtor. A Letter indeed ought not to be estimated by the length of it, but by the contents, and how can the contents of any Letter be more agreeable than your last.

You tell me, that John Gilpin made you laugh tears, and that the ladies at court are delighted with my Poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and they will be much happier than he! I know there is

in the book that wisdom, which cometh from above, because it was from above that I received it. May they receive it too! For whether they drink it out of the cistern, or whether it falls upon them immediately from the clouds, as it did on me, it is all one. It is the water of life; which whosoever drinketh, shall thirst no more. As to the famous horseman above-mentioned, he and his feats, are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them. You are perfectly at liberty to deal with them as you please. *Auctore tantùm anonymo imprimantur;* and when printed, send me a copy.

I congratulate you on the discharge of your duty, and your conscience, by the pains you have taken for the relief of the prisoners. You proceeded wisely, yet courageously, and deserved better success. Your labours however, will be remembered elsewhere, when you shall be forgotten here; and if the poor folks at Chelmsford should never receive the benefit of them, you will yourself receive it in heaven. It is pity, that men of fortune should be determined to acts of beneficence sometimes by popular whim, or prejudice, and sometimes by motives still more unworthy. The liberal subscription, raised in behalf of the widows of seamen, lost in the Royal George, was an instance of the former. At least a plain, short, and sensible Letter in the news-paper, convinced me at the time, that it was an unnecessary and injudicious collection: and

the

the difficulty you found in effectuating your benevolent intentions on this occasion, constrains me to think, that had it been an affair of more notoriety, than merely to furnish a few poor fellows with a little fuel to preserve their extremities from the frost, you would have succeeded better. Men really pious, delight in doing good by stealth. But nothing less than an ostentatious display of bounty, will satisfy mankind in general. I feel myself disposed to furnish you with an opportunity to shine in secret, We do what we can. But that can is little. You have rich friends, are eloquent on all occasions, and know how to be pathetic on a proper one. The winter will be severely felt at Olney by many, whose sobriety, industry, and honesty, recommend them to charitable notice: and we think we could tell such persons as Mr. ——— or Mr. ———, half a dozen tales of distress, that would find their way into hearts as feeling as theirs. You will do, as you see good; and we in the mean time shall remain convinced, that you will do your best. Lady Austen will no doubt do something. For she has great sensibility and compassion.

Yours, my dear Unwin,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 18, 1782.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

On the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr. ———. I call him ours, because having experienced his kindness to myself, in a former instance, and in the present, his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish, and your Mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to ———; he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money, but in this town, where the gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with labourious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless

less, that to make them partakers of his bounty, would be to abuse it. We promise however that none shall touch it, but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing. Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered, for waving your claim in behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and the ragged of the earth, and it is not possible for our small party, and small ability, to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept therefore your share of their gratitude, and be convinced, that when they pray for a blessing upon those who relieved their wants, He that answers that prayer, and when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laughs, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have.—Well—they do not always laugh so innocently, and at so small an expence—for in a world

a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody, has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la Bagatelle*—a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote, have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood perhaps had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain Book—Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future Letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the mean time have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear William, Doctor Beattie's is a respectable character. I account him a man of sense, a philosopher, a scholar, a person of distinguished genius, and a good writer. I believe him too a Christian; with a profound reverence for the scripture, with great zeal and ability to enforce the belief of it, both which he exerts with the candour and good-manners of a gentleman, he seems well entitled to that allowance: and to deny it him would impeach one's own right to the appellation. With all these good things to recommend him, there can be no dearth of sufficient reasons to read his writings. You favoured me some years since, with one of his volumes; by which I was both pleased and instructed: and I beg you will send me the new one, when you can conveniently spare it, or rather bring it yourself, while the swallows are yet upon the wing: for the summer is going down apace.

You tell me you have been asked, if I am intent upon another volume. I reply—not at present, not being convinced that I have met with sufficient encouragement. I account myself happy in having pleased a few, but am not rich enough to despise the many. I do not know what sort of market my commodity has found, but if a slack one, I must beware how I make a second attempt. My

bookseller will not be willing to incur a certain loss; and I can as little afford it. Notwithstanding what I have said, I write, and am even now writing for the press. I told you, that I had translated several of the Poems of Madame Guion. I told you too, or I am mistaken, that Mr. Bull designed to print them. That gentleman is gone to the sea-side with Mrs. Wilberforce, and will be absent six weeks. My intention is to surprise him, at his return, with the addition of as much more translation as I have already given him. This however is still less likely to be a popular work than my former. Men, that have no religion, would despise it; and men, that have no religious experience, would not understand it. But the strain of simple and unaffected piety in the original, is sweet beyond expression. She sings, like an angel, and for that very reason has found but few admirers. Other things I write too, as you will see on the other side, but these merely for my amusement.

On the loss of the Royal George, by desire of Lady Austen, who wanted words to the march in Scipio.

* * * * * * *

Take it to your organ. Like most other songs, it depends much upon the music. Turn over, and you will find it in another form.

In

In submersionem navigii, cui Georgius, regale nomen, inditum.

Plangimus fortes. Periere fortes,
Patrium propter periere littus
Bis quatèr centum; subitò sub alto
Æquore mersi.

Navis, innitens lateri, jacebat,
Malus ad summas trepidabat undas,
Cùm levis, funes quatiens, ad imum
Depulit aura.

Plangimus fortes. Nimis, heu, caducam
Fortibus vitam voluere parcæ,
Nec sinunt ultrà tibi nos recentes
Nectere laurus,

Magne, qui nomen, licèt incanorum,
Traditum ex multis atavis tulisti!
At tuos olim memorabit ævum
Omne triumphos.

Non hyems illos furibunda mersit,
Non mari in clauso scopuli latentes,
Fissa non rimis abies, nec atrox
Abstulit ensis.

Navitæsed tum nimiùm jocosi
Voce fallebant hilari laborem,
Et quiescebat, calamoque dextram im-
pleverat heros.

Vos, quibus cordi est grave opus piumque,
Humidum ex alto spolium levate,
Et putrescentes sub quis amicosa
Reddite amicis!

Hi quidem (sic dîis placuit) fuere:
Sed ratis, nondùm putris, ire possit
Rursùs in bellum, Britonumque nomen
Tollere ad astra.

W. C.

LETTER LXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 19, 1783.

My dear William, not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a scene of most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied. The addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately, at each other's *château*. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the afternoon wind thread. Thus did Hercules and Sampson; and thus do I; and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them

them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Having no frank, I cannot send you Mr. ———'s two Letters, as I intended. We corresponded as long as the occasion required, and then ceased. Charmed with his good sense, politeness, and liberality to the poor, I was indeed ambitious of continuing a correspondence with him, and told him so. Perhaps I had done more prudently, had I never proposed it. But warm hearts are not famous for wisdom; and mine was too warm to be very considerate on such an occasion. I have not heard from him since, and have long given up all expectation of it. I know he is too busy a man to have leisure for me, and ought to have recollected it sooner. He found time to do much good, and to employ us, as his agents in doing it: and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him, and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because, intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure, that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend this many a day; nor has there been an instance at any time, of a few poor families so effectu-

ally

ally relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry, by which, their debts being paid, the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before. But now it answers. It earns them bread; and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

I wish, that by Mr. ———'s assistance, your purpose in behalf of the prisoners, may be effectuated. A pen, so formidable as his might do much good, if properly directed. The dread of a bold censure is ten times more moving than the most eloquent persuasion. They that cannot feel for others, are the persons of all the world, who fee lmost sensibly for themselves.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXIX.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 8, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I contemplate the nations of the earth, and their conduct towards each other, through the medium of a scriptural light, my opinions of them are exactly like your own. Whether they do good or do evil, I see them acting under

under the permission or direction of that Providence, who governs the earth, whose operations are as irresistible as they are silent, and unsuspected. So far we are perfectly agreed, and howsoever we may differ upon inferior parts of the subject, it is as you say, an affair of no great consequence. For instance, you think the peace a better than we deserve, and in a certain sense I agree with you, as a sinful nation we deserve no peace at all, and have reason enough to be thankful that the voice of war is at any rate put to silence.

Mr. S———'s last child is dead—it lived a little while in a world of which it knew nothing, and is gone to another in which it is already become wiser than the wisest it has left behind.—The earth is a grain of sand, but the interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her kind Letter, and for executing her commissions. We truly love you both, and think of you often.

W. C.

LETTER LXX.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

April 5, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When one has a Letter to write, there is nothing more useful than to make a beginning. In the first place,

place, because unless it be begun, there is no good reason to hope it will ever be ended, and secondly, because the beginning is half the business, it being much more difficult to put the pen in motion at first, than to continue the progress of it, when once moved.

Mrs. C——'s illness, likely to prove mortal, and seizing her at such a time, has excited much compassion in my breast, and in Mrs. Unwin's both for her and her daughter. To have parted with a child she loves so much, intending soon to follow her, to find herself arrested before she could set out, and at so great a distance from her most valued relations, her daughter's life too threatened by a disorder not often curable, are circumstances truly affecting. She has indeed much natural fortitude, and to make her condition still more tolerable, a good Christian hope for her support. But so it is that the distresses of those who least need our pity excite it most, the amiableness of the character engages our sympathy, and we mourn for persons for whom perhaps we might more reasonably rejoice. There is still however a possibility that she may recover; an event we *must* wish for; though for her to depart would be far better. Thus we would always withold from the skies those who alone can reach them; at least 'till we are ready to bear them company.

Present our love if you please to Miss C——. I saw in the Gentleman's Magazine for last month, an account of a physician, who

who has discovered a new method of treating consumptive cases, which has succeeded wonderfully in the trial. He finds the seat of the distemper in the stomach, and cures it principally by emetics. The old method of encountering the disorder, has proved so unequal to the task, that I should be much inclined to any new practice, that comes well recommended. He is spoken of as a sensible and judicious man, but his name I have forgot.

Our love to all under your roof, and in particular to Miss Catlett, if she is with you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 5, 1783.

You may suppose that I did not hear Mr. ——— preach, but I heard of him—How different is that plainness of speech which a spiritual theme requires, from that vulgar dialect which this gentleman has mistaken for it! Affectation of every sort is odious, especially in a minister, and more especially an affectation that betrays him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate. Truth indeed needs no ornament,

neither does a beautiful person; but to clothe it therefore in rags, when a decent habit was at hand, would be esteemed preposterous and absurd. The best proportioned figure may be made offensive by beggary and filth, and even truths, which came down from heaven, though they cannot forego their nature, may be disguised and disgraced by unsuitable language. It is strange that a pupil of yours should blunder thus. You may be consoled however by reflecting, that he could not have erred so grossly if he had not totally and wilfully departed, both from your instruction and example. Were I to describe your stile in two words, I should call it plain and neat, *simplicem munditiis*, and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment. He that speaks to be understood by a congregation of rustics, and yet in terms that would not offend academical ears, has found the happy medium. This is certainly practicable to men of taste and judgement, and the practice of a few proves it. *Hactenus de Concionando.*

We are truly glad to hear that Miss C——— is better, and heartily wish you more promising accounts from Scotland—*Debemur morti nos nostraque.* We all acknowledge the debt, but are seldom pleased when those we love are required to pay it. The demand will find you prepared for it.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 12, 1783.

My dear friend, a Letter, written from such a place as this, is a creation; and creation is a work, for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit,* is a maxim, that applies itself in every case, where deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know, that although nothing could be the result, even that nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no news, I can tell you at least, that I esteem you highly; that my friendship with you and yours, is the only balm of my life; a comfort, sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

In the Review of last month, I met with an account of a Sermon preached by Mr. Paley, at the consecration of his friend, Bishop Law. The critic admires and extols the preacher, and devoutly prays the lord of the harvest to send forth more such labourers into his vineyard. I rather differ from him in opinion,

not being able to conjecture in what respect the vineyard will be benefited by such a measure. He is certainly ingenious, and has stretched his ingenuity to the uttermost in order to exhibit the church established, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the most favourable point of view. I lay it down for a rule, that when much ingenuity is necessary to gain an argument credit, that argument is unsound at bottom. So is his, and so are all the petty devices, by which he seeks to enforce it. He says first, that the appointment of various orders in the church, is attended with this good consequence, that each class of people is supplied with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate on terms of equality. But in order to effect this good purpose, there ought to be at least three parsons in every parish, one for the gentry, one for the traders and mechanics, and one for the lowest of the vulgar. Neither is it easy to find many parishes, where the laity at large have any society with their minister at all. This therefore is fanciful, and a mere invention: in the next place he says it gives a dignity to the ministry itself; and the clergy share in the respect paid to their superiors. Much good may such participation do them! They themselves know how little it amounts to. The dignity a parson derives from the lawn-sleeves, and square cap of his diocesan, will never endanger his humility.

Pope says truly—

"*Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow.*
"*The rest is all but leather or prunella.*"

Again,

Again—"Rich and splendid situations in the church, have been justly regarded as prizes, held out to invite persons of good hopes, and ingenuous attainments." Agreed. But the prize held out in the scripture, is of a very different kind; and our ecclesiastical baits are too often snapped by the worthless, and persons of no attainments at all. They are indeed incentives to avarice and ambition, but not to those acquirements, by which only the ministerial function can be adorned, zeal for the salvation of men, humility, and self-denial. Mr. Paley and I therefore cannot agree.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 31, 1783.

We rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs. C——'s death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature indeed, will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and christian friend departs, but the scripture, so many more, and so much more important reasons to rejoice, that on such occasions perhaps

perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land is affronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it that he only demises. This, which is a fiction, where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a christian, is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body, which it is his priviledge to be incumbered with no longer; and instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live. But this the world does not understand, therefore the kings of it must go on demising to the end of the chapter.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 8, 1803.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Our severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the green-house. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption, my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans

beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Revd. Mr. Bull of Newport, perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do, that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one, a man of letters, and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it; an imagination, which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party! at other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity, is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either. He can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco—nothing is perfect—

Nihil est ab omnī
Parte beatum.

On

On the other side I send you a something, a song if you please, composed last Thursday—the incident happened the day before.*

W. C.

LETTER LXXV

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 13, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your Dutch communications. The suffrage of such respectable men must have given you much pleasure, a pleasure only to be exceeded by the consciousness you had before of having published truth, and of having served a good master by doing so.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history went no further, I never saw a work that I thought more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history applied to so good a purpose. The facts incontestable, the grand observations upon them all irrefragable, and the stile in my judgment, incomparably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon. I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it. You have no ear for such music, whoever may be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though

* Here followed his Song of the Rose.

though you missed that freedom in writing, which you found before. While you were at Olney this was at least possible; in a state of retirement you had leisure, without which I suppose Paul himself could not have written his epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them.

The day of judgment is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare—a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference indeed will obtain in favour of the godly, which is, that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense an awful event, yet it will find *them* prepared to meet it. But the day being thus characterized, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture, some will look for it at one period, and some at another; we shall most of us prove at last to have been mistaken, and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof 'till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject, appear to me perfectly scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it, being however so singular, and of no importance to the happiness of mankind, and being moreover difficult to swallow, just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am, and always have been, a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations, which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret

scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the scriptures has seen fit to conceal, he will not, as the God of nature, publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself, and his purpose, if he designs a secret, impenetrable in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible however, for an observer of natural phænomena, not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last, still continue, though 'till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless sky. At eleven last night the moon was a dull red, she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere, but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time, and in a country where it has not happened in my remembrance, even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder-storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor so violent. Yesterday morning however, at seven o'clock, two fire-balls burst either in the steeple or close to it. William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue from the apertures in the steeple, as soon rendered it invisible: the noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard—you would have thought that a thousand

sledge

sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called Mist's Journal. A name well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty however as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a Poet nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic, to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXVI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 17, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your Letter reached Mr. S——— while Mr. ——— was with him; whether it wrought any change in *his* opinion of that gentleman, as a preacher, I know not, but for my own part I give you full credit for the soundness and rectitude of *yours*. No man was ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is, and because it is so, grows angry if it be not treated

with some management, and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will bear perhaps to be stroked, though he will growl even under that operation, but if you touch him roughly, he will bite. There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own; and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted, "he has given it them soundly and if they do not tremble, and confess that God is in him of a truth, he gives them up as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost for ever." But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify a conduct, which only proves that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him if he were not himself deluded.

A people will always love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people. The old maxim, *Simile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified: therefore you were beloved at Olney, and

and if you preached to the Chickesaws, and Chactaws, would be equally beloved by them.

LETTER LXXVII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 29, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The translation of your Letter into *Dutch*, was news that pleased me *much*. I intended plain prose, but a rhyme obtruded itself, and I became poetical when I least expected it. When you wrote those Letters you did not dream that you were designed for an apostle to the Dutch. Yet so it proves, and such among many others are the advantages we derive from the art of printing. An art in which indisputably man was instructed by the same great teacher, who taught him to embroider for the service of the sanctuary, and which amounts almost to as great a blessing as the gift of tongues.

The summer is passing away, and hitherto has hardly been either seen or felt. Perpetual clouds intercept the influence of the sun, and for the most part there is an autumnal coldness in the weather, though we are almost upon the eve of the longest day.

We are well, and always mindful of you, be mindful of us, and assured that we love you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXVIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 27, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a Letter from me than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents upon which many grave, and perhaps some profitable observations might be made; but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative, and the reflections it might suggest, are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—nothing—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted, my passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased. A circumstance, I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence,

Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chuses for us. Thus am I both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastile, there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key—but an invisible, uncontroulable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded, that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelve-month, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects, which to all the world beside, would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch, and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it——

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history, the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always, Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety. But you do not set your periods to a tune They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say; which, as history is a thing to be said, and not sung, is in my judgment, very much to your advantage. A writer, that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features—but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 4, 1783.

My dear William, I feel myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject, are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the enquiry you propose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst, and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced, that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim with success at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a Poet to entertain, in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and be not mortified, even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more than we have reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times; and we will acquit the Poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge as much as I was myself. The tune laid

me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines; which (I suppose) would suit no ear, but a French one: neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry (I believe) peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest, and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns, have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes, that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and, if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the what do ye call it—"'Twas when the seas were roaring." I have been well informed, that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows, this country ever saw, did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success however answered their wishes. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing in my judgment, all that Ovid

or

or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic, than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad-writers.—"A worthy subject" (you will say) "for a man, whose head might be filled with better things;"—and it is filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics, that may prove more amusing; as for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the green-house. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall: the windows and the door stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return, was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to, and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him; and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage, perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it afforded him, than to salute his friend, and converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute, he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's

cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved, that for the future, one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents. For at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I transcribe for you a piece of Madam Guion, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXXX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 7, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

So long a silence needs an apology. I have been hindred by a three-week's visit from our Hoxton friends, and by a cold, and feverish complaint, which are but just removed.

The French Poetess is certainly chargeable with the fault you mention, though I thought it not so glaring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured indeed, in all the translations I have made to cure

cure her of that evil, either by the suppression of passages exceptionable upon that account, or by a more sober and respectful manner of expression. Still however she will be found to have conversed familiarly with God, but I hope not fulsomely, nor so as to give reasonable disgust to a religious reader. That God should deal familiarly with man, or which is the same thing, that he should permit man to deal familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to conceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when some things are taken into consideration. Woe to the sinner, that shall dare to take a liberty with him, that is not warranted by his word, or to which he himself has not encouraged him. When he assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the friend of man, as the brother of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man, while he was on earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection. I doubt not therefore, that it is possible to enjoy an access to him even now, unincumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This however, can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him. And then I presume there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation, and near as we come, we come no nearer to him, than he is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our father. If we unbosom ourselves to him, as to a friend, it is because he calls us friends, and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first

used

used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language he delights to hear from his people. But I confess, that through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other christian privileges, is liable to abuse. There is a mixture of evil in every thing we do, indulgence encourages us to encroach, and while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here I think is the point in which my authoress failed, and here it is that I have particularly guarded my translation, not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is somewhat guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been always impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed by the views she had of it.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 8, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Mrs. Unwin would have answered your kind note from Bedford, had not a pain in her side prevented her. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account

account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with, while your disorder was most prevalent, though they were but reveries, and the offspring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind, to the best subjects. I had none such—indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has any thing less than a fever really dangerous, ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have a strong head, and perhaps for the same reason, that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding. The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on, and in Bedfordshire it is reported, how truly I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. I heard lately of a clerk in a public-office, whose chief empleyment it was for many years, to administer oaths, who being light-headed in a fever of which he died, spent the last week of his life, in crying day and night—"so help you God—kiss the book—give me a shilling." What a wretch in comparison with you!

Mr. S——— has been ill almost ever since you left us, and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clap on a blister, by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even

bishopricks

bishopricks themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and chearful.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr. Bacon, and make him sensible that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If in a state of mind that almost disqualifies me for society, I could possibly wish to form a new connection, I should wish to know him. But I never shall, and things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you; having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then afford you, by a communication of my present pains. But I have no claims of this sort upon Mr. Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both, with much affection, to Mrs. Newton, and to her and your Eliza—to Miss C——— likewise if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes, but in the land to which she is going, she will hold up her head, and droop no more: A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life, is better than the health of an antediluvian. Accept our united love.

My dear friend, sincerely yours.

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 23, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We are glad that having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves the sufferer debilitated to the last degree, you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. *Your* health and strength are useful to others, and in that view, important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up, I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits, that seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time, and still makes me very unfit for my favourite occupations, writing and reading—so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burthen.

John ——— has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die, but in this only instance of prophetic exertion, he seems to have been mistaken: he has however been very near it. I should have told you, that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you

know, though a silent, has been a very steady professor. He indeed fights battles, and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at his feats, foreign academies do not seek him for a member, he will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffata up to heaven. But he will go thither himself.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. ———. I had sent him notice of our visit a week before, which like a contemplative, studious man, as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance of being uninhabited. After waiting sometime however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly, that his garden seems a spot contrived only for the growth of melancholy, but being always affected by it, in the same way, I cannot help it. He shewed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits, with his back against one brick wall, and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing, and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expence, and with no small labour; several loads of earth were removed in order to make it, which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository

a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account, put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject, but he is not seldom low-spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's Voyages, when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading aloud.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 29, 1783.

My dear William, we are sorry that you and your household partake so largely of the ill effects of this unhealthy season. You are happy however, in having hitherto escaped the epidemic fever, which has prevailed much in this part of the kingdom, and carried many off. Your Mother and I are well. After more than a fortnight's indisposition, which slight appellation is quite adequate to the description of all I suffered, I am at length restored by a grain or two of emetic tartar. It is a

tax I generally pay in autumn. By this time (I hope) a purer ether than we have seen for months, and these brighter suns than the summer had to boast, have cheered your spirits, and made your existence more comfortable. We are rational. But we are animal too, and therefore subject to the influences of the weather. The cattle in the fields, show evident symptoms of lassitude and disgust, in an unpleasant season; and we, their lords and masters, are constrained to sympathize with them: the only difference between us is, that they know not the cause of their dejection, and we do, but for our humiliation, are equally at a loss to cure it. Upon this account, I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy, in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to their influence upon himself—and, while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project indeed supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes, gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern. One generation blows bubbles, and the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philosopher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes, to which the indolent are subject, and finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly, or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries,

though

though eventfully perhaps, they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him, as he does at new phænomena in the heavens, and perhaps understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence, to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honours, while he lives, and if another strips them off, when he has been dead a century, it is no great matter. He can then make shift without them.

I have said a great deal upon this subject, and know not what it all amounts to. I did not intend a syllable of it when I began. But *currente calamo*, I stumbled upon it. My end is to amuse myself and you. The former of these two points is secured. I shall be happy if I do not miss the latter.

By the way, what is your opinion of these air-balloons? I am quite charmed with the discovery. Is it not possible (do you suppose?) to convey such a quantity of inflammable air into the stomach, and abdomen, that the philosopher, no longer gravitateing to a centre, shall ascend by his own comparative levity, and never stop till he has reached a medium, exactly *in equilibrio* with himself? May he not, by the help of a pasteboard rudder, attached to his posteriors, steer himself in that purer element with ease, and again by a slow and gradual discharge of his aerial contents, recover his former tendency to the earth, and descend without the smallest danger or inconvenience? These things are worth inquiry;

and

and (I dare say) they will be inquired after as they deserve: The *pennæ non homini datæ*, are likely to be less regretted than they were; and perhaps a flight of academicians, and a covey of fine ladies, may be no uncommon spectacle in the next generation. A letter, which appeared in the public prints last week, convinces me that the learned are not without hopes of some such improvement upon this discovery. The author is a sensible and ingenious man, and under a resonable apprehension, that the ignorant may feel themselves inclined to laugh upon a subject, that affects himself with the utmost seriousness, with much good manners, and management, bespeaks their patience, suggesting many good consequences, that may result from a course of experiments upon this machine, and amongst others, that it may be of use in ascertaining the shape of continents and islands, and the face of wide-extended and far distant countries, an end not to be hoped for, unless by these means of extraordinary elevation, the human prospect may be immensely enlarged, and the philosoper, exalted to the skies, attain a view of the whole hemisphere at once. But whether he is to ascend by the mere inflation of his person, as hinted above, or whether in a sort of bandbox, supported upon balloons, is not yet apparent, nor (I suppose) even in his own idea perfectly decided.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

October 6, 1783.

My dear friend—it is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind, in the present life, as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should, through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes, the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from heaven to publish peace, between man and his maker—the prince of peace himself comes to confirm and establish it, and war, hatred, and desolation, are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book, which none of them understand. He that is slain, dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him, and he that slew him, is equally convinced that he has done God service.—In reality, they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set

out

out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road 'till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray preposterous and shocking in the extreme, would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present; even because they have exchanged a zeal that was no better than madness, for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd. The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations, called christian, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because he that was buried in it, is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy has cured them indeed of the misery of an abused understanding, but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it, have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here then we see the *ne plus ultrá* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials, but with respect to that in which the essence of christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith, but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain; that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples

disciples of the gospel have been more dangerous to its interests than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries, and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its divine original and nature, might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth, have proved indeed a stumbling-block to individuals, the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and the abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back, but the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still encreases, notwithstanding the unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the Voyages which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators, in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor; my main-sail is rent into shreds; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from the fire-side. The principal fruits of these circuits, that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that staid at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expence of such undertakings. We brought away an

Indian, and having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country—fine sport to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance, will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them; their poverty is indeed their mercy.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

October 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your American anecdotes, and feel the obligation perhaps more sensibly, the labour of transcribing being in particular that to which I myself have the greatest aversion. The Loyalists are much to be pitied, driven from all the comforts that depend upon, and are intimately connected with, a residence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a distant one, without the means of doing it, abandoned too through a deplorable necessity, by the government to which they have sacrificed all, they exhibit a spectacle of distress which one cannot view even at this distance, without participating in what they feel. Why could not some of our useless wastes and forests, have

have been allotted to their support? To have built them houses indeed, and to have furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expence; but I suppose the increase of population, and the improvement of the soil, would soon have been felt as a national advantage, and have indemnified the state, if not enriched it. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake, we sent them a ship-load of tools, to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember too, it was reported at the time, that the court of Portugal, accepted our wheel-barrows and spades with a very ill grace, and treated our bounty with contempt. An act like this, in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little farther, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to such a matter, may not be aware of difficulties and objections, which they of the cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men, proscribed by the Congress, might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave out of their reckoning him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a friend more powerful

to avenge, than they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted Loyalists. Their fears of arbitrary imposition, were certainly well founded. A struggle therefore might be necessary, in order to prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contest begets aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates at last in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely that a country so distinguished by the Creator, with every thing that can make it desirable, should be given up to desolation for ever; and they possibly may have reason on their side, who suppose that in time it will have the pre-eminence over all others; but the day of such prosperity seems far distant—Omnipotence indeed can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our reasonings, by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself, are constrained to do so.

I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle nations than I am; but when I write to you, I talk, that is I write as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge

ledge myself in your debt for your last favour, but cannot pay you now, unless you will accept as payment what I know you value more than all I can say beside; the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 10, 1783.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I have lost and wasted almost all my writing time, in making an alteration in the Verses I either inclose or subjoin, for I know not which will be the case at present. If prose comes readily, I shall transcribe them on another sheet, otherwise, on this. You will understand before you have read many of them, that they are not for the press. I lay you under no other injunctions. The unkind behaviour of our acquaintance, though it is possible that in some instances it may not much affect our happiness, nor engage many of our thoughts, will sometimes obtrude itself upon us with a degree of importunity, not easily resisted, and then perhaps, though almost insensible of it before, we feel more than the occasion will justify. In such a moment it was, that I conceived this Poem, and gave loose to a degree of resentment which perhaps I ought not to have indulged, but which in a cooler hour

hour I cannot altogether condemn. My former intimacy with the two characters was such, that I could not but feel myself provoked by the neglect with which they both treated me on a late occasion. So much by way of preface.

You ought not to have supposed, that if you had visited us last summer, the pleasure of the interview would have been all your own. By such an imagination you wrong both yourself and us. Do you suppose we do not love you? You cannot suspect your Mother of coldness, and as to me, assure yourself I have no friend in the world with whom I communicate without the least reserve, yourself excepted. Take heart then, and when you find a favourable opportunity to come, assure yourself of such a welcome from us both, as you have a right to look for. But I have observed in your two last Letters, somewhat of a dejection, and melancholy, that I am afraid you do not sufficiently strive against. I suspect you of being too sedentary—"you cannot walk"—why you cannot is best known to yourself. I am sure your legs are long enough, and your person does not overload them. But I beseech you ride, and ride often. I think I have heard you say, you cannot even do that without an object. Is not health an object? Is not a new prospect, which in most countries is gained at the end of every mile, an object? Assure yourself that easy chairs are no friends to cheerfulness, and that a long winter, spent by the fire-side, is a prelude to an unhealthy spring. Every thing I see in the fields, is

to

to me an object, and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree every day of my life, with new pleasure. This indeed is partly the effect of a natural taste for rural beauty, and partly the effect of habit, for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and of conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it. I earnestly recommend a cultivation of the same taste to you, suspecting that you have neglected it, and suffer for doing so.

Last Saturday se'nnight, the moment I had composed myself in my bed, your Mother too having just got into hers, we were alarmed by a cry of fire, on the staircase. I immediately rose, and saw sheets of flame above the roof of Mr. Palmer's house, our opposite neighbour. The mischief however was not so near to him as it seemed to be, having begun at a butcher's yard, at a little distance. We made all haste down stairs, and soon threw open the street-door, for the reception of as much lumber of all sorts, as our house would hold, brought into it by several who thought it necessary to move their furniture. In two hour's time, we had so much that we could hold no more, even the uninhabited part of our building being filled. Not that we ourselves were intirely secure—an adjoining thatch, on which fell showers of sparks, being rather a dangerous neighbour. Providentially however, the night was perfectly calm, and we escaped. By four in the morning it was extinguished, having consumed many out-buildings, but no dwelling

dwelling house. Your Mother suffered a little in her health, from the fatigue and bustle of the night, but soon recovered; as for me it hurt me not. The slightest wind would have carried the fire to the very extremity of the town, there being multitudes of thatched buildings and faggot-piles, so near to each other, that they must have proved infallible conductors.

The balloons prosper; I congratulate you upon it. Thanks to Montgolfier, we shall fly at last.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 24, 1783.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

An evening unexpectedly retired, and which your Mother and I spend without company, (an occurrence far from frequent,) affords me a favourable opportunity to write by to-morrow's post, which else I could not have found. You are very good to consider my literary necessities with so much attention, and I feel proportionably grateful. Blair's Lectures, though I suppose they must make a part of my private studies, not being *ad captum fœminarum*, will be perfectly welcome. You say you

you felt my verses, I assure you that in this you followed my example, for I felt them first. A man's lordship is nothing to me, any farther than in connection with qualities that entitle him to my respect. If he thinks himself privileged by it, to treat me with neglect, I am his humble servant, and shall never be at a loss to render him an equivalent. I will not however belie my knowledge of mankind so much, as to seem surprised at a treatment which I had abundant reason to expect. To these men, with whom I was once intimate, and for many years, I am no longer necessary, no longer convenient, or in any respect an object. They think of me as of the man in the moon, and whether I have a lantern, or a dog and faggot, or whether I have neither of those desirable accommodations, is to them a matter of perfect indifference: upon that point we are agreed, our indifference is mutual, and were I to publish again, which is not impossible, I should give them a proof of it.

L' Estrange's Josephus has lately furnished us with evening lectures. But the historian is so tediously circumstantial, and the translator so insupportably coarse and vulgar, that we are all three weary of him. How would Tacitus have shone upon such a subject, great master as he was of the art of description, concise without obscurity, and affecting without being poetical. But so it was ordered, and for wise reasons no doubt, that the greatest calamities any people ever suffered, and an accomplishment of one of the most signal prophecies in the scripture, should be recorded by

one of the worst writers. The man was a temporizer too, and courted the favour of his Roman masters, at the expence of his own creed, or else an Infidel, and absolutely disbelieved it. You will think me very difficult to please, I quarrel with Josephus for the want of elegance, and with some of our modern historians for having too much. With him for running right forward like a gazette without stopping to make a single observation by the way, and with them for pretending to delineate characters that existed two thousand years ago, and to discover the motives by which they were influenced, with the same precision as if they had been their contemporaries. Simplicity is become a very rare quality in a writer. In the decline of great kingdoms, and where refinement in all the arts is carried to an excess, I suppose it is always rare. The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day; and with respect to authors of the present æra, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple.

Your Mother wants room for a postscript, so my lecture must conclude abruptly.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is hard upon us striplings, who have uncles still living (N. B. I myself have an uncle still alive) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question; that I for instance, should find in one page of your Letter, a hope, that Miss Shuttleworth would be of your party, and be told in the next, that she is engaged to your Uncle. Well we may perhaps never be uncles, but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privileges of old age, and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies, to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments if you please, to your Sister Eliza, and tell her, that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, a little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family, whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor of the estate, is a young man whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never

had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here, we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure-grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having 'till then enjoyed it by favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civilest terms, in which he told me, that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your Mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was I believe very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was however flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us, than we could possibly have expected, indeed rather more than of any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both. A large elm in a grove, that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain, insisted

on

on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her 'till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it in a manner that made in impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one—a few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going toward the house, and exchanged bows and curtsies at a distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron-gate belonging to the court yard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily toward us, we made equal haste to meet him, he presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour, and after a few such speeches, as are made upon such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less, than that all this civility and attention, was designed on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way; neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments, (neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry) Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have

I have told you a long story. Farewel. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you, and your Sister soon.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 3, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your silence began to be distressing both to your Mother and me, and had I not received a Letter from you last night, I should have written by this post, to enquire after your health. How can it be that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation, and mix with a variety of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials, and yourself destitute. I assure you faithfully, that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles, as make Letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice. We have

One parson, one poet, one belman, one cryer,
And the poor poet is our only 'squire.

Guess

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two Letters from you, than you one from me. The principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot-door being swelled by the thaw, would do anything better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts, that we were immediately obliged to introduce a chirurgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a lock'd-jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates, and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences however are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not perhaps be either so perspicuous or so diffuse on the subject of which you desire my sentiments as I should be, but I will do my best. Know then that I have learnt long since of the Abbé Raynal to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large, consequently the charter in question would not at any rate, be a favourite of mine. This however is of itself, I confess, no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it. But such reasons I think are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited if those conditions are exceeded, if the design

design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor. This appears to me to be no mis-representation of their case, whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East-Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no soverignty, it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised, and forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should even have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead, the right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind, a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance that I have ever heard, consulting their interest or advantage. That government therefore is bound to interfere, and to un-king these tyrants, is to me self evident. And if having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding on the legislature to resume it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth

truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance, never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent, unless it could be alledged as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the Governors of the Bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time, I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XC.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did; but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon

a wilderness, through which he has passed with weariness, and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour, than the poor consolation, that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened, if as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length and equally desolate should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine, would exactly tally. I should rejoice indeed, that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophecy a new one similar to it.

I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure; and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you, that you did her no more than justice in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his great riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose, that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the church to be wealthy, at a time when churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of the magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER XCI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 3, 1784.

My dear William, when I first resolved to write an answer to your last this evening, I had no thought of any thing more sublime than prose. But before I began, it occurred to me, that perhaps you would not be displeased with an attempt to give a poetical translation of the lines you sent me. They are so beautiful, that I felt the temptation irresistible. At least, as the French say, it was *plus forte que moi;* and I accordingly complied. By this means I have lost an hour; and whether I shall be able to fill my sheet before supper, is as yet doubtful. But I will do my best.

For your remarks, I think them perfectly just. You have no reason to distrust your taste, or to submit the trial of it to me. You understand the use, and the force of language, as well as any man. You have quick feelings, and you are fond of poetry. How is it possible then, that you should not be a judge of it. I venture to hazard only one alteration; which, as it appears to me, would amount to a little improvement. The seventh and eighth lines (I think) I should like better—thus—

Aspirante levi zephyro et redeunte serenâ
Anni temperie, fœcundo è cespite surgunt.

My reason is, that the word *cúm* is repeated too soon. At least my ear does not like it; and, when it can be done without injury to the sense, there seems to me to be an elegance in diversifying the expression as much as possible upon similar occasions. It discovers a command of phrase, and gives a more masterly air to the piece. If *extincta* stood unconnected with *telis*, I should prefer your word *micant*, to the doctor's *vigent*. But the latter seems to stand more in direct opposition to that sort of extinction, which is effected by a shaft or arrow. In the day-time the stars may be said to die, and in the night to recover their strength. Perhaps the doctor had in his eye, that noble line of Grey—"*Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war!*" But it is a beautiful composition. It is tender, touching, and elegant. It is not easy to do it justice in English, as for example—*

Many thanks for the books, which being most admirably packed, came safe. They will furnish us with many a winter evening's amusement. We are glad, that you intend to be the carrier back.

We rejoice too, that your Cousin has remembered you in her will. The money she left to those that attended her hearse, would have been better bestowed upon you: and by this time perhaps she thinks so. Alas! what an enquiry does that thought suggest, and how impossible to make it to any purpose! What are the employments

* The Verses appearing again with the original in the next Letter, are omitted.

employments of the departed spirit, and where does it subsist? Has it any cognizance of earthly things? Is it transported to an immeasurable distance; or is it still, though imperceptible to us, conversant with the same scene, and interested in what passes here? How little we know of a state to which we are all destined; and how does the obscurity, that hangs over that undiscovered country, increase the anxiety we sometimes feel, as we are journeying towards it! It is sufficient however, for such as you, and a few more of my acquaintance to know, that in your separate state you will be happy. Provision is made for your reception; and you will have no cause to regret aught, that you have left behind.

I have written to Mr. ———. My Letter went this morning. How I love and honour that man! For many reasons I dare not tell him, how much. But I hate the frigidity of the style, in which I am forced to address him. That line of Horace—"*Dii tibi divitias dederunt artemque fruendi*"—was never so applicable to the poet's friend, as to Mr. ———. My bosom burns to immortalize him. But prudence says, "Forbear!" and, though a poet, I pay respect to her injunctions.

I sincerely give you joy of the good you have unconsciously done, by your example and conversation. That you seem to yourself not to deserve the acknowledgement your friend makes of it, is a proof that you do. Grace is blind to its own beauty, whereas such

such virtues as men may reach without it, are remarkable self-admirers. May you make such impressions upon many of your order! I know none that need them more.

You do not want my praises of your conduct towards Mr.—— It is well for him however, and still better for yourself, that you are capable of such a part. It was said of some good man—(my memory does not serve me with his name)—"Do him an ill turn, and you make him your friend for ever." But it is christianity only, that forms such friends. I wish his father may be duly affected by this instance and proof of your superiority to those ideas of you, which he has so unreasonably harboured. He is not in my favour now, nor will be upon any other terms.

I laughed at the comments you make on your own feelings, when the subject of them was a news-paper eulogium. But it was a laugh of pleasure, and approbation: such indeed is the heart, and so is it made up. There are few that can do good, and keep their own secret, none perhaps without a struggle. Yourself, and your friend ——, are no very common instances of the fortitude, that is necessary in such a conflict. In former days, I have felt my heart beat, and every vein throb, upon such an occasion. To publish my own deed was wrong. I knew it to be so. But to conceal it seemed like a voluntary injury to myself. Somestimes I could, and sometimes I could not succeed. My occasions for such conflicts indeed were not very numerous.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XCII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 25, 1784.

My dear friend, this contention about East-Indian patronage, seems not unlikely to avenge upon us, by its consequences, the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party; and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country, whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale; absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage, and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country, to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable tyranny at home. That sort of tyranny I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more, bribing to the right and left, rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong

strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic, and of no effect. I am the king's most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But by his majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or of the simplicity of of his views; and if I were satisfied, that he himself is to be trusted, it is nevertheless palpable, that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred, and shall never wish prosperity to a party, that invades it, and that under the pretence of patriotism, would annihilate all the consequence of a character, essential to the very being of the constitution. For these reasons I am sorry, that we have any dominion in the East, that we have any such emoluments to contend about. Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute; and such struggles having been already made in the conduct of it, as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose, that still greater efforts, and more fatal are behind; and after all, the decision in favour of either side, may be ruinous to the whole. In the mean time, that the Company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the king-ship, is most deplorably evident. What shall I say therefore? I distrust the court, I suspect the patriots, I put the Company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business, and see no remedy of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East-Indies.

The

The late Doctor Jortin
Had the good fortune,
To write these verses
Upon tombs and hearses;
Which I, being jingleish,
Have done into English.

In brevitatem vitæ spatii, hominibus concessi.

Hei mihi! Lege ratâ sol occidit atque resurgit,
Lunaque mutatæ reparat dispendia formæ,
Astraque, purpurei telis extincta diei,
Rursus nocte vigent. Humiles telluris alumni
Graminis herba virens, et florum picta propago,
Quos credelis hyems lethali tabe peredit,
Cum zephyri vox blanda vocat, rediitque sereni
Temperies anni, fœcundo é cespite surgunt.
Nos domini rerum, nos, magna et pulchra minati,
Cum breve ver vitæ robustaque transiit ætas,
Deficimus; nec nos ordo revolubilis auras
Reddit in ætherias, tumuli neque claustra resolvit.

On the SHORTNESS of HUMAN LIFE.

Suns, that set, and Moons that wane,
Rise and are restored again.
Stars, that orient day subdues,
Night at her return renews.

Herbs and flowers, the beauteous birth
Of the genial womb of Earth,
Suffer but a transient death
From the Winter's cruel breath.
Zephyr speaks; serener skies
Warm the glebe; and they arise.
We, alas! Earth's haughty kings,
We, that promise mighty things,
Losing soon Life's happy prime,
Droop and fade in little time.
Spring returns, but not our bloom,
Still 'tis Winter in the Tomb.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XCIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad, that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue. Your reason for not proceeding was however such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your spirit should be betrayed into acrimony in writing upon such a subject." I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point, and indeed, at the time,

time, I could not discover, that you had failed in it. I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto. The motto you mention is certainly apposite. But I think it an objection, that it has been so much in use, almost every writer, that has claimed a liberty to think for himself upon whatever subject, having chosen it. I send you therefore one, which I never saw in that shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper. The Greek word, δεσμος, which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains, which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind. It seems therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no misnomer of your book, to call it

Μισοδεσμος.

The following pleases me most of all the mottoes I have thought of. But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure.

Querelis
Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas.
Æn. X. 94.

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of Poet. Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer, full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection.

It is possible too, that I may live to be once more a publisher myself; in which case I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own. At present however I have nothing that would be of use to him, nor have I many opportunities of composing, sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone.

I am at this moment pinched for time, but was desirous of proving to you, with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey you, and therefore, by the first post, have, to the best of my ability, complied with your request.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER XCIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 10, 1784

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation

cupation than at any other time. So it fares with us, whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal œconomy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers, the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed and fit to appear abroad. But on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits, which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood (I suppose) the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery, but physicians (I presume) they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible, that a creature like myself, can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without cloathing, would defy the severest season, and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have

have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough, by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering Laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however, that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices and enfeebling self-indulgence of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, 'till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centered in my puny self.—A man indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me. A man, who sigh and groan, who wear out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never think of the Aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him, a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was aukward indeed in the extreme. It

was

was evident, that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature, whose strength had suffered no diminution, and who being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis therefore, there has been a gradual declension in point of bodily vigor from Adam down to me, at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XCV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I give you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks continuance with very little interruption, the longest, that has happened since the Year 1739. May I presume, that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence

gence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are all as well apprised of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it as myself. It is (I suppose) every where felt as a blessing, but no where more sensibly than at Olney; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must therefore be observed with the same attention. He however is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At the same time, I confess, it is a consolation, and I feel it an honour, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the news-papers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of

my

my documents. But if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified I take courage; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the Metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me, that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and Lord North is a villain, that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations, which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct, and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe, that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think, that secret influence is a bug-bear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose; the mere *shibboleth* of a party: And being, and having always been, somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty, I am not able to withold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it.

Caraccioli upon the subject of self-acquaintance was never (I

believe) translated. I have sometimes thought, that the Theological Miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work, which I much admire. You, who are master of their plan, can tell me, whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances; and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

Remember us, as those, that love you, and are never unmindful of you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XCVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We are glad, that you have such a Lord Petre in your neighbourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further acquaintance with him, not doubting, that the more he knows you, he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary for want of certain rhythmical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his Lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honor may await

await you. Seriously however, I respect his character, and should not be sorry, if there were many such Papists in the land.

Mr.——— has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same amount; accompanied indeed with an intimation, that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is, that next winter we are to expect nothing. But, the man and his beneficent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to hope, that, logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your Letter again, I perceive, that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his Lordship. Had I forgot to tell you, that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore, that I happened to cast my eye upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing so apt to betray us into absurdity as too great a dread of it; and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little: but you have escaped very well. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself de-

prived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen blunders, which in a common case I should not have committed, and have no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I recollect how much better I could have made it; how easily and genteelly I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable aukwardness of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what, and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's prefaces every night, except when the newspaper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition with a newspaper; or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis?

W. C.

I am so disgusted with ——, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not chuse to express my feelings. Woe to the man, whom kindness cannot soften!

LETTER XCVII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 8, 1784.

I thank you for the two first numbers of

of the Theological Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but sufficiently to observe, that they are much indebted to Omicron. An Essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall be glad, if a neighbour of ours, to whom I have lent them, should be able to apply to his own use the lesson it inculcates. On farther consideration, I have seen reason to forego my purpose of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more calculated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforce a conviction of the vanity of all pursuits, that have not the soul's interests for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manner of instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours, would escape nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages of evangelical ordinances, and christian communion, he falls into a mistake, natural in his situation, ascribing always the pleasures he found in a holy life, to his own industrious perseverance in a contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of the great Comforter of his people, and directing the eye of his readers to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in the soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, and not to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen under Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a charming writer, and by those, who know how to make such allowances, may be read with great delight and improvement. But with these defects in his manner, though (I believe) no man ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dressed with sufficient exactness to be fit for the public eye, where

where man is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all. He must therefore be dismissed, as an unsuccessful candidate for a place in this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected in the first instance, than if he had met with a refusal from the publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota.

W. C.

LETTER XCVIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 11, 1784.

I return you many thanks for your apology, which I have read with great pleasure. You know of old, that your style always pleases me; and, having in a former Letter given you the reasons, for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive, that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good tempered; in all cases (I suppose) where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions truth itself seems a satire, because, by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason perhaps you will find, that you have made

made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible, that they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an enlightened minister of the gospel, may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the establishment, and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some dissenting doctors; and, to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring, that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole however, I have no doubt, that your apology will do good. If it should irritate some, who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them, that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy in the ministry of a church, of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention, to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

The patronage of the East-Indies will be a dangerous weapon, in whatever hands. I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same, that I have of a possibility, that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side, in which case we shall be poor, but,

but (I think) we shall stand a better chance to be free; and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast and be no man's slave, than wear a chain and drink tea as usual.

I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate William and Mary.

W. C.

LETTER XCIX.

To the Reverend JOHN NEWTON.

March 19, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wish it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli.——Some years since I saw a short history of him in the Review, of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for ought I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance, and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman. Had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his

his stile that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic if it were occasionally only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affecting. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps therefore I may describe it better by saying that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least, is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud for the entertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can, for the end of this second winter.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER C.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

March 29. 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It being his Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the Parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprize, a mob appeared before the window, a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the

maid announced Mr. G———. Puss* was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. G———, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he, and as many as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence; which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less no doubt because Mr. A———, addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any, I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. G——— squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel,

* His tame Hare.

genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he had a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribband from his button-hole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself however happy in being able to affirm truly, that I had not that influence for which he sued, and for which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world, where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town however seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. A——— perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honor of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. G——— that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

Mr. S——— who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts

hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teizes away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps out-grow it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

April, 1784.

People that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But for my own part, I would sooner take Empedocles's leap, and fling myself into Mount Ætna than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the Scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy, it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that

that measure of it only, which may be endured even in this life, the christian world, perhaps, would have been less comfortable: but I believe presumptuous medlers with the Gospel would have been less frequently met with. The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find, that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! Every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other; but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed, or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cock-boat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the Carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, for this time forth for ever. There is a word, that makes this world tremble; and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjurer! Pharaoh's conjurers had twice his ability.

Believe me, my dear friend, affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 5, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I thanked you in my last for Johnson, I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with. The only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man: and that man so gentle, so well tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him if one has any sense of what is lovely. If you have not his Poem called the Minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie. I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But Oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers,

or

fer or gratuitous communication, and the next occasion, that
; of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech
stands thus, " Oh give Apple!" The Apple-holder perceives
:lf called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satisfied his
hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately
is still room for a mistake, and, a third person being present,
ves the Apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again per-
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or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Dr. Blair has such a brain as Shakespear somewhere describes, "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

I take it for granted, that these good men are philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language; and if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis for want of better information. I should suppose for instance, that man made his first effort in speech, in the way of an interjection, and that Ah or Oh being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An Apple would consequently be called an Apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would exclaim with a most moving pathos, "Oh Apple!"—well and good—Oh Apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it, and *he* goes away with Oh Apple in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting on his disapointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of transfer

transfer or gratuitous communication, and the next occasion, that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, " Oh give Apple!" The Apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satisfied his own hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and, a third person being present, he gives the Apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there, after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify that he not only wants the Apple to be given, but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the Apple and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now as my two syllable-mongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present, took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced, that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an opinion of my own so different from theirs, who are so much wiser then myself, that if man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases

only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a Poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not Adam on the very day of his creation, was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

April 25, 1784.

I wish I had both burning words, and bright thoughts. But I have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already written a long Letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The Post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give you as much as I can spare of the present evening.

Since

Since I dispatched my last, Blair has crept a little farther into my favor. As his subjects improve, he improves with them, but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is (except Swift's) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it, are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author than really tastes them, and who finds, that a passage is praise-worthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism, in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though, when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunder-storm, in the First Georgic, which ends with

Ingeminant austri et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words. But my memory will serve me with the matter. "When Poets de-

scribe," he says, " they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and therefore most striking." He therefore admires the effects of the thunder-bolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question, I think his skill in this respect remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such only as the word *Ingeminant* could describe, and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do no think the Æneid contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad, that Dr. C——— has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: ——fear not——you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and therefore will not fail you upon this, The burning words

words will come fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

April 26, 1784.

We are glad, that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those, whom nothing could satisfy, but your accession to their party. But the liberal will say you do well; and it is in the opinion of such men only, that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie, and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished. I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects, that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar, that we seem to be conversing with an old friend upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious, that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy, which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar,

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in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man, indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance, ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find, that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means or other previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originally beget authors. But authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments; and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and, having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art, which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified. They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries, which propriety sets to fancy, and serving, as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those, who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

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The candidates for this county have set an example of œconomy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expences of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however, which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say, who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn, to which they had fled; and, a fear prevailing, that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about, and endeavor to secure them. At that instant, a rioter, dressed in a Merry Andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. A——— was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him, he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his scull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody, without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it; and in

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five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend! We love you, and are yours,

W. & M.

LETTER CV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 3, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any farther than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable

markable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those, who use it; either, that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their color to be natural for a moment any more than he would, if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly, to the inartificial manner, in which they paint: for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious, till she attained an age, that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very

beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favorable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art; and if to deceive, wherefore, and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character, and in no instance should I think the worse of one, because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me, if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well, if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic: and here I feel, that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose, that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own for reasons, that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others;

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an acquisition, that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case however can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain, that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one. But they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themslves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand, that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England she, that uses one, commonly uses both. Now all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous, in time, to the constitution. The Miss B——above-mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain, that her flesh fell from her bones, before she died. Lady C—— was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality of a length, that would astonish us.

For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England: and for a reason superior to all these I must disap-

prove it. I cannot indeed discover, that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the persons, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is (I am sure) contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman, whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only, when it is an imitative art. For in the use of French women I think it as innocent as in the use of a wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive valeque.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER CVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 8, 1784.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own; for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat

what disposed to melancholy by natural temperament as well as by other causes.

It was long since and even in the infancy of John Gilpin recommended to me by a lady, now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed, that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves, when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me, what it is made of. But buy it not. For, puffed as it is in the papers, it can but be a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last pacquet but one, that I received from Johnson, he asked me, if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any: for that to print only the original again, would be to publish what has been hackneyed in every magazine, in every news-paper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy, which I sent him, contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose; and that if he thought him now too trite to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgment. I take it for granted therefore, that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride. But, spring it from what it may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal, that he is mine; and since he became so popular,

I have

I have felt it more than ever, not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of; and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that, when on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of the Task I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content therefore with having laughed and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success, as a Poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will (I hope) bring me to an end of the Task, and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tirocinium do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know, that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination;

mination; and it is fit, that the eyes and noses of mankind should (if possible) be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter. But it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you!

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your Mother's remembrances.

W. C.

LETTER CVII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

May 22, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favorable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded, that, not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me, that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate

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for evangelical truth whether in prose or verse. I therefore inclose a short acknowledgment, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can (I imagine) without much difficulty, convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can very easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those, who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present however I am not surprised, that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us, since I received your last. It was on Thursday, that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints. But we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them honor: for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such

such coxcombs against a man of his erudition, and ability. Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CVIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

June 5, 1784.

When you told me, that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Doctor Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book, and the business, I inferred from that expression, that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently, that he had a right to thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks, which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now, were it possible, that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no otherway anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you, and some others, had given a favourable one, than it was natural I should be, knowing, as I did, that his opinion had been consulted.

I am affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER CIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 3, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him—let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary, it is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one, and stranger still, that being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine Bard, and perhaps by a reperusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life, when we are best qualified to read them, when the judgment and the taste being formed their beauties are least likely to be over-looked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have seen this month with a peculiar

peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses, he is jocular, and laughs, though considering that wheels and miles, and grooms, were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provoked me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles—some families, he says, will suffer little by it—why?—because they are so poor that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery, seems worthy of a hero—but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom, had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all, a commodity being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice therefore, oh ye penny-less! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining half-penny will be safe, instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candle-light, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man, who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember, that the half-penny which government imposes, the shop-keeper will

swell to two-pence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter-months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon, till mid-night: I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots, and sedans, in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card-tables. I wish in short that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous, is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver-end, keeps an ass, the ass lives on the other side of the garden-wall, and I am writing in the green-house, it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, whether cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts, and hinders me, but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse of my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CX.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 5, 1784.

My dear friend, a dearth of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part, and must be uninteresting, and unimportant; but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me; have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment, provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation: During the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigors of winter. This fine day however, affords us some hope, that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible, that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish, which they dignified with the

the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities, that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence, that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture, as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal (I remember) introduces one of his satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader at the same time, cause to suspect, that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness, that he would not for all the world, get into a boat with a man, who had divulged the Eleusinian mysteries. Yet we know, that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine, as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox Heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines, which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental

mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting, hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or non-sense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter, in which I am so little interested, that, were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum, if after advertising a month in the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man, that cares about him or his measures, so little as I do. When I say, that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood, that I would forfeit such a sum if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best I fear, that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

" *Si Pergama dextrâ*
" *Defendi possent, etiàm hâc defensa fuissent.*"

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says indeed, that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and

and such an argument to support it. Justly translated, it seems to amount to this—"Make the necessaries of life too expensive for "the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they "buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they "buy none, the tax, as to them, will be annihilated." True. But in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors, to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrûm.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER CXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 12, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I think with you, that Vinney's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done

done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty I believe contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say, that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato
Or *Basia quæ juveni indulsit Susana beato*
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua.

The preceeding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich thus managed, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen, resemble the original so much. At some time or other, you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by

your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come, when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review, but dipping into it, I accidentally fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author whom they so much admire. I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors, as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and as presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry, as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion, that because it would be no sin to divert the course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also. For the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions through which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks, to all generations. But the life of a man, and the water of a river, can never come

into

into competition with each other, in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of Classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A Virgil, the property of Mr. S———, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of Tenses, unless when you are present.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER CXII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 19, 1784.

In those days, when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday-ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them, had such an humourous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle, which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents

of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences.

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment, has occurred in the course of the last week, at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CXIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

July 28, 1784.

My dear friend, I may perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there, above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distant from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock. At least you might have done so twenty years ago. But since that time (I think) it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and

and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will, perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner, in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin, gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope, that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him, as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder, that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles, that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems however a step towards the truth to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking, that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them, that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But, whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind, my friendship for

you

you indeed is as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones, are promised me, and when I see them, I shall rejoice.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved (I suppose) to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove, that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately. But I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both.

We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C.—M. U.

LETTER

LETTER CXIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 14, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I give you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured sculls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road. Thanks to that tender interest and concern, which the Legislature takes in my security! Having no doubt their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure; they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your Mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers, such amusement, as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no farther. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you, that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us, during their absence, to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without

the

the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honey-suckles as served to perfume our dwelling 'till they returned.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture we made acquaintance with the island of Hapaee, where we had never been before. The French and Italians it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their atchievements in the dancing way; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this however have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion, they might even be our masters. How wonderful too, that with a tub, and a stick, they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music, cannot but hear with pleasure. Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other. Their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the Northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation,

speculation, and often entertain me even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts, and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production, and in transcribing it; I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however, is not so unproductive of subjects of censure, but that it may possibly supply me with some other, that may serve as well.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write an epic poem on the new regulation of *Franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, perituraque gratia Franki!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

LETTER CXV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 16, 1784.

Had you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should

not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusements it affords, I should have had more modesty, than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing to your present entertainments, worthy to rank with them. I am not however, totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette; which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant; and if I have not an hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a green-house, a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation, as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton-meadow. Thrice it rose, and as oft' descended; and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow, discharged at the pigeon, in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little, if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the most bloody war, that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems, that in some of the Friendly Isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite

exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. Oh! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us, that the Queen of France has clapped this king of capers up in prison, for declining to dance before her, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think, that the durance he suffers, would be well exchanged for a dance at Annamooka. I should however, as little have expected to hear, that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art, that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians, and astronomers. Defective as they are, in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful, that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance; which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore, that particular nations, have a genius for particular feats, and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South-Sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin, at her Brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad, that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope, that Eliza is better. You will learn from this Letter, that we are so, and that for my own part, I am not quite so low in spirits, as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am your

W. C.

LETTER CXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Sept. 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have my thanks for the inquiries you have made. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman-street, but must beg that you will give me in your next, an exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiæ of which I have made none; it is besides slavish work,

work, and of all occupations, that which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that if he chuses to print it, it may go to the press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to 3276. I imagine therefore, that the whole contains about 5000. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another Letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. ———, whom I had not seen many years. He introduced himself to us very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure, that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him, in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said, that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of

it

it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine, to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it, is a most innocent one, and partakes not, in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope, that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXVII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Following your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease 'till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgement of it, has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting

reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser.

My green-house is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in summer; when the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time, incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive, I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it, by a hum, which though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear, as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing, but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one

one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour, for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no abd performer: and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble, to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however, it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits—And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled, by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is some where in infinite space, a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural to suppose, that there is music in heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found. Tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more

insupportable,

insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours.

W. C.

LETTER CXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 2, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

A Poet can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading, before you go to town; which, whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle; which in blank-verse is of the last importance, and of a species, peculiar to that composition; for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank-verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints, and notices, to regulate the inflexions, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair, that in spite of grammarians, must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris*. For (I suppose) every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you

will have it on Saturday, the ninth. But this is more than expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh; in which case, it will not reach you till the thirteenth. I the rather think, that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—"*Fit surculus arbor.*" If you can put the author's name under it, do so—if not, it must go without one. For I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto, taken by a certain Prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as I think, to a medal.

Mr. ——— is a Cornish member. But for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it. But he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your Mother invited her, and I him; and they promised to return the visit, bnt have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs. W———. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous expression, and should what

I write

I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known therefore, to the Aldusses, and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm, that Mrs. W——— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed, that she was ever there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be with propriety said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proof-sheets hither, and back again. They must travel (I imagine) by coach, a large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all jointly and separately, as usual.

Yours ever,

W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

LETTER CXIX.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 9, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expence with which it was threatened,

convincing me that my Letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality. You complain of unconnected thoughts.. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours. The description of your meditations at least suits mine, perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth, that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for when I ask myself, what was the last idea (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy, what was the last word) I am not able to answer, but like the boy in question, am obliged to stare, and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, messieurs les philosophes, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however, we may both be right; and if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing, that though the soul be in herself an active principle, the

influence

influence of her present union with a principle that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliqnium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise; you must therefore, either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is an human soul: a negative that I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to day.

Last night I had a Letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprise me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in St. James's Square. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however, forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making, on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of providence in his favour, was converted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that had preceeded it. When he departed, he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return, he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief,

thief, after the property had been restored, was magnified to an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, 'till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind, I think, in any degree spiritual, cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps, that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know, that even in a sensible man, it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or a stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege.* We

* NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

Having enjoyed in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious Seaman, on board his own ship the Resolution, I cannot pass the present Letter without observing that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook, in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian Navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance, as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty.

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CXX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 10, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I send you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of 'till I see them in print. I have not after all, found time or industry enough, to give the last hand to the points. I believe however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satyrical. Writing on such subjects, I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured, is not to be expected, from the efforts of

of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend were to approve it. From this charge at least, I shall be clear, for I have neither tactily nor expressly flattered either its characters, or its customs. I have paid one, and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withold it, especially having so fair an occasion, (I forget myself, there is another in the first book, to Mr. Throckmorton) but the compliment I mean is to Mr. ———. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume, I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons—first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lopez de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expence of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature. Not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience. Not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could

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(for blank-verse without variety of numbers, is no better than bladder and string) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however, I do not think it altogether indefensible) it may yet boast, that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceeding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency. To discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life; and to recommend rural ease, and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you, I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it, an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER CXXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 20, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your Letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith

in your judgment, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem, is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and who is he, that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however, which you have in hand, will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since, I began a piece, which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean, that it shall pursue the track of the former. That is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first; and if after having seen it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an i, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how to be occasionally

occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John, having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces, that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgment, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece, which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the cieling, and cry, "Humph!" anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying, that you know I should be sorry, that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me if I did not. But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me, what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you, that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nicols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as learning; and I suppose, that you would not want a gentleman-usher to introduce you. He prints the Gentleman's

Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expence, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140—Truth generally without the article, the, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, etc; and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt, what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge, that grace in my use of the word does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the scripture. Thence I take the word grace. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially, as God's favour in the abstract, has no other word in all our language, by which it can be expressed.

Page 150—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all.*—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed, that a little unevenness of this sort in a long work has a good effect, used I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked. Be pleased to alter for me thus, with the difference of only one word, from the alteration proposed by you——

We too are friends to royalty. We love
The king, who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently, snails, and all reptiles, that spoil our crops, either of fruit or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure, that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank-verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity, must rather be singularly perspicuous to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour, and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose, that I have great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess, which the whole strain of scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

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I can easily see, that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *alma mater*; and I have banged her too. Lay yourself therefore, under no constraints, that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewel. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXXII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 30, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I accede most readily to the justness of your remarks, on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich-islanders. Proofs of such prowess (I believe) are seldom exhibited by a people, who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement, and profligacy of principle, are too nearly allied to admit of any thing so noble; and I question, whether any instances of faithful friendship like that, which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They had been a nation, whose virtues it is impossible not

not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case, seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God, than her cicisbèos and her fiddlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth, which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie; or if there be any difference between the two cases, it seems to be rather in favour of the latter: for a false persuasion, such as the Mahometan for instance, may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly, by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich-islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being imprest by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty, that will disgrace them for ever: for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am again at Johnson's, in the shape of a Poem in blank-verse, consisting of six books, and called The Task. I began it about this

this time twelve-month, and, writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half an one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful, whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller (I suppose) will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world, till the month of March; when I and the crocusses shall peep together. You may assure yourself, that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! We are well, and love you.

Yours and Mrs. Newton's,

W. C.

LETTER CXXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 1, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Were I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad, for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and

and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument, that at least he was no loser by the former. I collect from it some reasonable hope, that the volume in question, may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions) that your heart fluttered, when you approached Johnson's door; and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen, when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the T———s; they will now know, that you do not pretend a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to tell him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased. But I think he cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least injured by his reserve; neither should I, if he were to publish a whole library without favouring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship, not to communicate, though there must be a friendship, where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work secret; and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one, I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating

from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain in it, that any man living is nearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an invisible closeness to the last; and the first news, that either you or any of my friends would have heard of the Task, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as poet nor as man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expence.

I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of Tirocinium) as fast as the muse permits. It has reached the length of 700 lines, and will probably receive an addition of 2 or 300 more. When you see Mr. ——— perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half-a-dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry, that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given

given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottos, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand, as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not (I think) fewer than half-a-dozen to his Essays.

Adieu!

W. C.

LETTER CXXIV.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Nov. 27, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

All the interest, that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas, that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your Letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship, in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects in point of attention, and

attachment to you, my conduct to you on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with; I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you inclosed in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for—secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that, which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenons and mortises, by which the several passages are connected, and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus—and lastly, an extract as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you, and as I have admitted into my description no images, but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of scripture language, I have hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants;

and

and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the Universities. A Letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a General Officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censures of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a Poem, called Tirocinium, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment, the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is, and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they cannot be conveniently educated at home. Mr. Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the Poem is inscribed to him, You will now (I hope) command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, 'till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that (I dare say) you will wave your desire

desire of it. A poem, thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—"*Nulla dies sine lineâ*"—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly, that though more than once, I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But I do not mean to write blank-verse again. Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause, and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry, that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr. Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me, when you meet. No artist can excel, as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be, amiable.

Adieu, my dear friend.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXXV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I am happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest, that I shall not at least disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time, with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticize me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause of being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event—it is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now, is to give you information on the following subject—The moment Mr. Newton knew (and I took care that he should learn it first from me) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly Letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmurs of something like mortification, that could not be intirely suppressed. It contained nothing however, that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded

concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract, by way of specimen, or (which he should like better still) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons, (but especially because I would no more show my Poem piece-meal, than I would my house if I had one, the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him, without disgracing myself. The proof-sheets I have absolutely, though civilly, refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work; and to these I have added, an extract as he desired; selecting, as most suited to his taste, the view of the restoration of all things, which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *a merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor Poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favorable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense, and courage, that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman, two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate

W. C.

LETTER CXXVI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Dec. 13, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having imitated no man, I may reasonably hope, that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He, that should write like either of them, would in my judgment, deserve the name of a copyist, but not a poet. A judicious, and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say, that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble their's, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank-verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme: and why the modern writers of it, have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity, that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however, that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to

nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible, that, as the Reviewer of my former volume found cause to say, that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the Reviewer of this, whoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to over-rate my own productions, I am persuaded, that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume, that I gained by the last. As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident, that gave birth to the poem; nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday news-monger, call it the Olio. But I should do myself wrong, for though it have much variety, it has, I trust, no confusion.

For the same reason, none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book, to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading (I should say the introductory) passage of that particular book, or from that which

which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the sofa, the gridiron should have been my title. But the sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post, from which I addressed myself to the long race, that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honour it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The Time-Piece appears to me, (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs, is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgement; and dealing pretty largely in the signs of the times, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation, which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the Paradise Lost, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it, but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken too, if Shakespear's Cleopatra do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are however, without all doubt, convertible terms—a worm is a small serpent,

and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER CXXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I condole with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosoper or two on board, but at the same time, should be very sorry to expose myself for any length of time to the rigor of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather, by that fervency of spirit, and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The

The inscription of the Poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore, an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind: nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason, that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared however, that the Reviewers, or some of my very sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind, and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman, every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children. I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are, both of us, incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you to be necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last, to have given you my reasons for the compliment I have paid to Bishop Bagot, lest knowing, that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place then, I wished the world to know, that I have no objection to a bishop, *quià* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were, all five,

five, my school-fellows; and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a Sermon, which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations. as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes, me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been publickly traduced: and indeed the Reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the Sermon, preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance at least could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a Letter from Mr. Newton, that did not please me, and returned an answer to it, that possibly may not have pleased him. We shall come together again soon (I suppose) upon as amicable terms as usual. But at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased, had the book past out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure, which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the Poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and

and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

Yours, with our love to all,

W. C.

LETTER CXXVIII.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

Christmas Eve, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am neither Mede nor Persian, neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhamsted, in Hartfordshire; and yet I can neither find a new title for my book, nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am however willing to hope, that when the volume shall cast itself at your feet, you will be in some measure reconciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the Poem, and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject, very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard any anecdotes of poor dying ——, that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking; that little however I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him, how he found himself, he replied, "I am very composed, and think that I may safely

"believe

"believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him in the Northampton Mercury; but Christians (I suppose) have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit.*

W. C.

LETTER CXXIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

The slice which you observe has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost before I began to write; but being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a defect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a Letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompense I can make you, for writing without a frank, is to propose it to you to take your revenge by returning an answer under the same predicament;

predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is, the occasion following—In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of Tirocinium, dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened however, that the Poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two-thirds of it are at this time fairly transcribed. An accident to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know before they mount him, at what rate he will chuse to travel. If he be indisposed to dispatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace, if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time, is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you, that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will be ready to attend you; for without exerting any extraordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know that four lines of it were composed while I had a dose of ipecacuana on my stomach. In short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses in the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a Poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets who have found cathartics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particulary brilliant. Dryden always used them, and in commemoration of it, Bayes in the Rehearsal is

made to inform the audience that in a poetical emergency, he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprize having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

My love to all your family.

Adieu!

W. C.

LETTER CXXX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 15, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your Letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a Letter was the more easily written, because the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials, in a situation such as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month (I believe) has passed since I heard from him. But my *friseur*, having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased, that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect, that he was even mortified at being informed, that a certain inscribed Poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people, that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

I know not whether Mr. ——— has acted in consequence of your hint, or whether, not needing one, he transmitted to us his bounty, before he had received it. He has however, sent us a note for Twenty pounds; with which we have performed wonders in behalf of the ragged and the starved. He is a most extraordinary young man, and though I shall probably never see him, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential remembrance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope, that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies—a sage by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim—grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize!
By fame on earth—by glory in the skies!

It is destined (I believe) to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But Nicols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands not yet printed, (it is called the Poplar-Field, and, I suppose, you have it) I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my Epitaph upon Tiney; which, I likewise imagine, has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson, I am easy however upon the subject, being assured that so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part, for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man (I presume) of great good sense and spirit, (his Letters at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such) a man, qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that atchievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when for ought that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXXXI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 7, 1785.

We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom,

seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction, that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence, to which you will not be altogether indifferent; that I have received and returned to Johnson the two first proof-sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar-Field appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more, a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen, and another on a Rose-bud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which whether you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nicols prints off the Poems I send him, I send him new ones. My remittance usually consists of two; and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August, and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following anecdote at your Mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain Lord has hired a house at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for

for a hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and (I believe) an amiable one in all. The Reverend Mr. Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading; and his Lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed to the said Mr. Jones, an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives, which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr. Jones however, like a wise man, informed his Lordship, that for certain especial reasons and causes, I had declined going into company, for many years, and that therefore, he must not hope for my acquaintance. His Lordship most civilly subjoined, that he was very sorry for it. "And is that all?" Say you. Now were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish, and say—"Yes." But having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say, "No, that is not all." Mr. ———, who favours us now and then with his company, in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence, which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions, that had taken place in his favour. "He had wished for many things (he said) which at "the time, when he formed those wishes, seemed distant and im- "probable, some of them indeed impossible. Among other wishes "that he had indulged, one was, that he might be connected with "men of genius and ability—and in my connection with this "worthy gentleman, (said he, turning to me) that wish I am sure,

"is

" is amply gratified." You may suppose, that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead, when I heard this speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid down my pen, and spent some minutes in recollection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank that remains. But none presents itself. Farewel, therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fire-side, and believe me ever most affectionately yours,

W. C.

They that read Greek, with the accents, would pronounce the ε in φιλεω, as an η. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

LETTER CXXXII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 20, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I thank you for your Letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within

within the dimensions of a Letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too, to see my opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject, that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however, that were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to the notice of my Lord, or his Grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof-sheets to the amount of ninety-three pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three pacquets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose, that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however, that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him, that were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of

the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found that the Emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negotiations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me: a great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities—troops are in motion—artillery is drawn together—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation—thousands will perish who are incapable of understanding the dispute, and thousands who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then! you have composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited—be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects—be concerned for the havock of nations, and mourn over your retarded volume, when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have 'sparagus, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston; at least, we may hope for it; therefore come in May; you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism, I believe, the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable—but your own feelings on occasion of that article, pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, I know the author. But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so, a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion.

Adieu!

W. C.

LETTER CXXXIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 30, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I return you thanks for a Letter so warm with intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a Lady there had

undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise, that the Head-Master of St. Paul's School (who he is I know not) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me. Let us hope that he will alter his mind; for should we even exchange civilities on the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however, in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume, of which his history will make a part. Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing; the disappointment, that Horace mentions, is reversed——We design a mug, and it proves an hogshead. It is a little hard, that I alone, should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your Letter and mine together have operated to admiration, there needs nothing more, but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge 'till they were spurred, and when they were spurred, they would kick. So did he. His temper was somewhat disconcerted; but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was

I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last——"I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication." Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more inquires after the work, which, 'till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgment, neither he nor I, in any of our Letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons, by which I justified my conduct; I never made a secret of them, but both your Mother and I have studiously deposited them with those, who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only an hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such, that they were sure to prevail.

You mention ———. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were school-fellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the Poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again; and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will like ———, (who was but a boy when I left London) boast of a connexion with me, which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself

self and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour, and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, (I believe) in the life of one of our poets, says, "that he retired from the world flattering himself, that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him." I think his observation upon it is, that "the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual, is soon filled up, that a man may always be obscure, if he chuses to be so, and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected."

Your Mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's-nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent-bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood, and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectation.

Yours truly,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 27, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You and your party left me in a frame of mind, that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations, which though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish—but that hope proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. ——— made his appearance at the green-house door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man, but with all his recommendations, I felt that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present, whom we love a little. I have however, made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days when a violent thunder-storm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was I suppose, perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion, constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression

impression that such an event never fails to affect me with—the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the burst of a great gun,) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once, and so precisely the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and to end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. An house at no great distance from ours, was the mark to which the lightening was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woeful end of many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney since I have known the place, and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. I have received, since you went, two very flattering Letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump, and an humble poet proud, but being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect they had, than that they pleased me, and I communicate the intelligence to you not without an assured hope, that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written

written before I have received your Letter.———Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible—when I began, I designed four sides, but my pacquet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope. I am proceeding in my translation—"*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*"—as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next. Mr. ——— has just left us; he has read my book, and as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties. I do assure you, the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste, that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was excited in you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought, that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought because a dog or a cat suggested it, the meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ is an idolater, but he in whose heart the sight of a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian. Suppose that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy. Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagi-

nation? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all. It is your Mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER CXXXV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 27, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar-bottle, is welcome from his friends on the out-side of it——accordingly your books were welcome, (you must not forget by the way, that I want the original of which you have sent me the translation only) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees, whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum.

Memorandum—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms. You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan, it flies heavily and never far, but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that my volume meets with, and I believe in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney, will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Revd. Mr. S——— is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was that he was the greatest elephant in the world himself excepted. If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ———'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper, contains not one sentiment worth one farthing, except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with church-fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue, in all

other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession, he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort, have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper, I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner, with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough; for the sake of one however, I forgive him the rest—he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace, by a disappointment, I would wish to cherish upon every subject in which I am interested. But there lies the difficulty. A cure however, and the only one, for all the irregularities both of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former Letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* or *that*. I do not rashly

differ

differ from so great a grammarian, nor do at any rate differ from him altogether—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones, for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also;—because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression that in respect of the matter of it, cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfasting-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXXXVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 22, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You might well suppose, that your Letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself, that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness, is

is the cause. I have, as you well know, a daily occupation, forty lines to translate, a task which I never excuse myself, when it is possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both, my morning and evening are for the most part completely engaged. Add to this, that though my spirits are seldom so bad, but that I can write verse, they are often at so low an ebb as to make the production of a Letter impossible. So much for a trespass, which called for some apology, but for which to apologize further, would be to commit a greater trespass still.

I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the farther I go, the more I find myself justified in the undertaking; and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about 40,000 verses, about which 40,000 verses, I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore, whether such a labour once atchieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can, if not, at least some credit for my reward.

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are best to begin with, and none in the world so far as entertainment is concerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know, that there is any where to be found

Greek

Greek of easier construction. Poetical Greek I mean; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's Cyropædia. That also is a most amusing narrative, and ten times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams, and scribblements of the minor poets, that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write the language legibly is not the lot of every man, who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little Ode of Huntingford's, that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection.

W. C.

LETTER CXXXVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You would have found a Letter from me at Mr. ———'s, according to your assignation, had not the post,

post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The Odyssey, that you sent, has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it., The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself. I am now in the last book of the Iliad; shall be obliged to you therefore, for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription; and he desired me in his answer, not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him, adding, that he could make me such offers as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his Letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. ———, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very encouraging, and obliging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length, and moment, but such as at the same time, I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let

Let me sing the praises of the desk, which ——— has sent me. In general it is as elegant as possible. In particular it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome, small chest, and contains all sorts of accommodations; it is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of a reading-desk.

Your affectionate

W. C.

LETTER CXXXVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 31, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You have learned from my last, that I am now conducting myself upon the plan, that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negociation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I make up a complete list of the personages and persons, to whom I would have them sent; which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to my conception of the matter, and seems sensible that I have dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome into my pocket," and recom-

mends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means, advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas; the half, as usual, to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names (he adds) at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have of course written to Mr. Bagot; who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection, intreated me so to do, as soon as I should have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company, since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application; which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town. You observe therefore, that I am not wanting to myself. He that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints, and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public, and I respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation, so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness, and in the present case, am sensible how especially necessary it is to shun them,

them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and before hand for all that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure, that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour, and respectability, when the man you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me, that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer, that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many, who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish, that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind, who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr. ——— of the expedience of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children, as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw,

caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole. You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take the charge of its safe delivery to Johnson. For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your Mother joins with me in love and good-wishes, of every kind, to you and all yours.

Adieu!

W. C.

LETTER CXXXIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 14, 1786.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I am glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable

amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions, that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind! You have two drums, and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible for any man to tell me—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible, that he could be determined to it by a conceit, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake, proceed any farther? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found, that he left off exactly where he should, and that every epic poem to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not in the least doubt it. Therefore if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had

I had truly a kind Letter from Mr. ———, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society, than mine is ever likely to be.

You say—"Why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer—why not? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other?

You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour; and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would, that all the world were so blind even as you are. But there are some in it, who like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however, that in your one eye, you have sight enough to discover, that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXL.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, March 13, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I seem to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a Letter but a scrap, that I shall send you. I could tell you things that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you, but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic, that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss; has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer, has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast as I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXLI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 3, 1786.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

After a long silence, I begin again. A day given to my friends, is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption, now and then occurring, I have no objection. Lady Hesketh is as you observe, arrived—and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased in her turn, with every thing she finds at Olney; is always cheerful, and sweet-tempered: and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her. This disposition in her, is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits, occasioned merely by a change of scene, but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first. We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still, to have you to partake with us in our joy. I am fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney, than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers

formers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is as she ever was, my pride and my joy; and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me; my spirits, instead of being greatly raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke down with me, under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flat, or rather melancholy, throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself, and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness, have far exceeded her expectations; for she knew that sable had been my suit for many years.

And now I shall communicate news that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your Mother lived in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purposes of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a jail-delivery is at hand. The bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance, and accommodation, expects us; and the expence of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in

England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my Cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us, and the house is large enough to take us and our suite, and her also with as many of hers as she shall chuse to bring. The change will I hope prove advantageous, both to your Mother and me, in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there we shall have most agreeable neigbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy-smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds, in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your Mother's constitution and mine, have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John and his studies. I should recommend the civil war of Cæsar, because he wrote it, who ranks I believe as the best writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are, but you do, and can easily find them) that

that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I mean, in both departments; and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would, I should think, prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy, with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points, has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me; therefore I thus advise.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER CXLII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 24, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I catch a minute by the tail and hold it fast, while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. F——— does me the honour to say, that the most difficult, and most interesting parts of the poem, are admirably rendered. But because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them; not but that I have retouched considerably, and made better still the best. In short, I hope to make it all of a

piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A story-teller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction, and harmony of versification, can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off; and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter-evening conversations. His purpose seems to be, that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle, for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

Believe me, my dear William, truly yours,

W. C.

Mr. Throckmorton will (I doubt not) procure Lord Petres' name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my success than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him; and should be glad of him and the whole Conclave.

LETTER

LETTER CXLIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect confidence, that they are safe, and will go no farther. All who are attached to the jingling art, have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least, to whom they might publish what they have composed. If you approve my Latin, and your Wife and Sister my English, this together, with the approbation of your Mother, is fame enough for me.

He who cannot look forward with comfort, must find what comfort he can in looking backward. Upon this principle, I t'other day sent my imagination upon a trip, thirty years behind me. She was very obedient, and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster. I fancied myself once more a school-boy, a period of life in which if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its contrary. No manufacturer of waking dreams ever succeeded better in his employment than I do. I can weave such a piece of tapestry in a few minutes, as not only has all the charms of reality, but is embellished also with

a

a variety of beauties, which though they never existed, are more captivating than any that ever did—accordingly I was a school-boy in high favour with the master, received a silver-groat for my exercise, and had the pleasure of seeing it sent from form to form, for the admiration of all who were able to understand it. Do you wish to see this highly applauded performance? It follows on the other side.

(Torn off)

LETTER CXLIV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You are sometimes indebted to bad weather, but more frequently to a dejected state of mind, for my punctuality as a correspondent. This was the case when I composed that tragic-comic ditty for which you thank me, my spirits were exceedingly low, and having no fool or jester at hand, I resolved to be my own. The end was answered, I laughed myself, and I made you laugh. Sometimes I pour out my thoughts in a mournful strain, but those sable effusions your Mother will not suffer me to send you, being resolved that nobody shall share with me the burthen of my melancholy but herself. In general you may suppose that I am remarkably sad when I seem remarkably merry. The effort we make to get rid of a load, is usually violent

in

in proportion to the weight of it. I have seen at Sadlers' Wells, a tight little fellow dancing with a fat man upon his shoulders; to those who looked at him, he seemed insensible of the incumbrance, but if a physician had felt his pulse, when the feat was over, I suppose he would have found the effect of it there. Perhaps you remember the Undertakers' dance in the Rehearsal, which they perform in crape hat-bands and black-cloaks, to the tune of "Hob or Nob;" one of the sprightliest airs in the world. Such is my fiddling, and such is my dancing; but they serve a purpose which at some certain times could not be so effectually promoted by any thing else.

I have endeavoured to comply with your request, though I am not good at writing upon a given subject. Your Mother however comforts me by her approbation, and I steer myself in all that I produce by her judgment. If she does not understand me at the first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure, and always alter them; if she laughs I know it is not without reason, and if she says—"that's well, it will do"—I have no fear lest any body else should find fault with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who licenses all I write.

To Miss C———, on her Birth-Day.

How many between East and West,
Disgrace their parent Earth,
Whose deeds constrain us to detest
The day that gave them birth!

Not

Not so when Stella's natal morn
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
And wish her born once more!

If you like it, use it. If not you know the remedy. It is serious, yet epigrammatic—like a bishop at a ball!

W. C.

LETTER CXLV.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you; but though I have had many thoughts upon the subjects you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs, but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity; years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables; they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of parliament, and I suppose, there is hardly a member of either, who would not immediately assent to the

the necessity of a reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops; and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked, when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes, a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are, among our worthy representatives, that come under either of these descriptions? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt-liquor, to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of Bishops would find it difficult to over-rule. And with respect to the violation of oaths, 'till a certain name is more generally respected then it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so laudable an enterprize, but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me, by hopeless desponding me, would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting, and disgrace the cause

instead of serving it. If after what I have said however, you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tuâ*, there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER CXLVI.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write under the impression of a difficulty not easily surmounted, the want of something to say. Letter-spinning is generally more entertaining to the writer, than the reader; for your sake therefore, I would avoid it, but a dearth of materials is very apt to betray one into a trifling strain, in spite of all our endeavours to be serious.

I left off on Saturday, this present being Monday morning, I renewed the attempt in hopes that I may possibly catch some subject by the end, and be more successful.

So have I seen the maids in vain
Tumble and tease a tangled skein,
They bite the lip, they scratch the head,
And cry—"the Deuce is in the thread!"

They

They torture it, and jerk it round,
'Till the right end at last is found,
Then wind, and wind, and wind away,
And what was work is chang'd to play.

When I wrote the first two lines, I thought I had engaged in a hazardous enterprize: for thought I, should my poetical vein be as dry as my prosaic, I shall spoil the sheet, and send nothing at all; for I could on no account endure the thought of beginning again. But I think I have succeeded to admiration, and am willing to flatter myself, that I have even seen a worse impromtu in the newspapers.

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the fate of England, engages much of our attention. The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our once-peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance. I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt, than that of an ancient castle, that had been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall, the next, and the next, and the next blow encreased it. Another shock puts the whole mass

in motion, from the top to the foundation; it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular; till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. Every million that has been raised within the last century, has had an effect upon the constitution, like that of a blow from the aforesaid ram, upon the aforesaid wall. The impulse becomes more and more important, and the impression it makes is continually augmented; unless therefore something extraordinary intervenes to prevent it—you will find the consequence at the end of my simile.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXLVII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

As I promised you verse, if you would send me a frank, I am not willing to return the cover without some, though I think I have already wearied you by the prolixity of my prose.*

I must refer you to those unaccountable gaddings and caprices of the human mind, for the cause of this production; for in general I believe, there is no man who has less to do with the ladies' cheeks than I have: I suppose it would be best to antedate it, and to imagine that it was written twenty years ago, for my mind was never

* Here followed his Poem—"The Lily and the Rose."

never more in a trifling butterfly-trim, than when I composed it, even in the earliest follies of my life. And what is worse than all this, I have translated it into Latin. But that some other time.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXLVIII.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question; you say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine: a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears if indeed I owe you any, for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with: I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics—those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again; and as to the Minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all—I tasted most of them, and did not like them—it is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name

name of Poet—I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his Life, seems to have undertaken that task for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and under the erroneous influence of that thought, informed his reader that Gotham, Independence, and the Times, were catchpennies. Gotham, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains, as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance (and Dryden perhaps, in his Absalom and Architophel stands in need of the same indulgence) for an unwarrantable use of scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. Independence is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character, which I think is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the Times (except that the suject is disgusting to the last degree,) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part, but were shall we find in any of those authors, who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously

ously ventured upon, and so happily finished, the matter so compressed, and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others. A proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote so much, and so fast, would through inadvertence and hurry, unavoidably have departed from rules, which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph.

"*Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra*
"*Esse sinent*———."

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER

LETTER CXLIX.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I find the Register in all respects an entertaining medley, but especially in this, that it has brought to my view some long-forgotten pieces of my own production. I mean by the way two or three. Those I have marked with my own initials, and you may be sure I found them peculiarly agreeable, as they had not only the grace of being mine, but that of novelty likewise to recommend them. It is at least twenty years since I saw them. You I think was never a dabler in rhyme. I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of age, when I begun with translating an Elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a Poet, than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer, but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much, that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine, is like a child's rattle, very entertaining to the trifler that uses it, and very disagreeable to all beside. But it has served to rid me of some melancholy moments, for I only take it up as a gentleman-performer does his fiddle. I have this peculiarity belonging to me as a rhymist, that though I am charmed to a great degree with my own work, while it is on the anvil, I can seldom bear to look at it when it is once finished. The more I contemplate

contemplate it, the more it loses of its value, till I am at last quite disgusted with it. I then throw it by, take it up again perhaps ten years after, and am as much delighted with it as at the first.

Few people have the art of being agreeable when they talk of themselves, if you are not weary therefore, you pay me a high compliment.

I dare say Miss S—— was much diverted with the conjecture of her friends. The true key to the pleasure she found at Olney, was plain enough to be seen, but they chose to overlook it. She brought with her a disposition to be pleased, which whoever does, is sure to find a visit agreeable, because they make it so.

Yours,

W. C.*

LETTER CL.

To the Revd. J. JEKYLL RYE, Dallington, near Northampton.

Weston, April 16, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am truly sorry that you should have suffered any apprehensions such as your Letter indicates, to

 molest

* NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

This dateless Letter, which is probably entitled to a very early place in this collection, was reserved to close the correspondence with Mr. Unwin, from the hope, that before the press advanced so far, the Editor might recover those unknown Verses of Cowper to which the Letter alludes, but all researches for this purpose have failed.

molest you for a moment. I believe you to be as honest a man as lives, and consequently do not believe it possible that you could in your Letter to Mr. Pitts, or any otherwise, wilfully misrepresent me. In fact you did not; my opinions on the subject in question, were, when I had the pleasure of seeing you, such as in that Letter you stated them to be, and such they still continue.

If any man concludes because I allow myself the use of sugar and rum, that therefore I am a friend to the *Slave-Trade*, he concludes rashly, and does me great wrong; for the man lives not, who abhors it more than I do. My reasons for my own practice, are satisfactory to myself, and they whose practice is contrary, are, I suppose, satisfied with their's. So far is good. Let every man act according to his own judgment and conscience, but if we condemn another for not seeing with our eyes, we are unreasonable, and if we reproach him on that account, we are uncharitable, which is a still greater evil.

I had heard before I received the favour of your's, that such a report of me as you mention, had spread about the country. But my informant told me, that it was founded thus. The people of Olney petitioned Parliament for the abolition—my name was sought among the subscribers, but was not found—a question was asked, how that had happened?—answer was made, that I had once indeed been an enemy to the Slave-Trade, but had changed my mind, for that having lately read a history or an account of Africa,

I had

I had there seen it asserted, that till the commencement of that traffic, the Negroes multiplying at a prodigious rate, were necessitated to devour each other; for which reason, I had judged it better that the trade should continue, than that they should be again reduced to so horrid a custom.

Now all this is a fable. I have read no such history; I never in my life read any such assertion, nor had such an assertion presented itself to me, should I have drawn any such conclusion from it—on the contrary, bad as it were, I think it would be better the Negroes should even eat one another, than that we should carry them to market. The single reason, why I did not sign the petition was, because I was never asked to do it, and the reason why I was never asked, was because I am not a parishioner of Olney.

Thus stands the matter. You will do me the justice, I dare say, to speak of me as of a man who abhors the commerce, which is now I hope in a fair way to be abolished, as often as you shall find occasion. And I beg you henceforth, to do yourself the justice to believe it impossible that I should for a moment suspect you of duplicity or mis-representation. I have been grossly slandered, but neither by you, nor in consequence of any thing that you have either said or written. I remain therefore, still as heretofore, with great respect,

Much and truly yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin's compliments attend you.

LETTER CLI.

To the Revd. JOSEPH JEKYLL RYE, Dallington.

Weston, Nov. 3, 1793.

DEAR SIR,

Sensible as I am of your kindness in taking such a journey, at no very pleasant season, merely to serve a friend of mine, I cannot allow my thanks to sleep till I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope never to show myself unmindful of so great a favour. Two lines which I received yesterday from Mr. Hurdis, written hastily on the day of decision, informed me, that it was made in his favour, and by a majority of twenty. I have great satisfaction in the event, and consequently hold myself indebted to all who at my instance have contributed to it.

You may depend on me for due attention to the honest Clerk's request. When he called, it was not possible that I should answer your obliging Letter; for he arrived here very early, and if I suffered any thing to interfere with my morning studies, I should never accomplish my labours. Your hint concerning the subject for this year's copy, is a very good one, and shall not be neglected.

I remain sincerely yours,

W. C.

TWELVE LETTERS,

WRITTEN IN THE EARLY PART OF THE POET'S LIFE,

TO HIS RELATION,

The Lady HESKETH.

The Editor's reasons for introducing the following Letters in this part of the volume, may be best expressed in the words of Cowper, speaking on the arrangement of his Poem, The Task—"What there is of a religious cast in the volume, I have thrown towards the end of it, for "two reasons—first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance—and secondly, that my "best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lopez de Vega, or "Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the "worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please "them at the expence of my conscience."

LETTER I.

The Temple, August 9, 1763.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having promised to write to you, I make haste to be as good as my word. I have a pleasure in writeing to you at any time, but especially at the present, when my days are spent in reading the Journals, and my nights in dreaming of them. An employment not very agreeable to a head, that has long been habituated to the luxury of chusing its subject, and has been as little employed upon business, as if it had grown upon the shoulders of a much wealthier gentleman. But the numscull pays for it now, and will not presently forget the discipline it has undergone

gone lately. If I succeed in this doubtful piece of promotion, I shall have at least this satisfaction to reflect upon, that the volumes I write, will be treasured up with the utmost care for ages, and will last as long as the English Constitution. A duration which ought to satisfy the vanity of any author, who has a spark of love for his country. Oh, my good Cousin! If I was to open my heart to you, I could shew you strange sights; nothing I flatter myself that would shock you, but a great deal that would make you wonder. I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men, that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool; but I have more weaknesses than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present. In short, if I was as fit for the next world, as I am unfit for this, and God forbid I should speak it in vanity, I would not change conditions with any Saint in Christendom.

My destination is settled at last, and I have obtained a furlough. Margate is the word, and what do you think will ensue Cousin? I know what you expect, but ever since I was born, I have been good at disappointing the most natural expectations. Many years ago Cousin, there was a possibility that I might prove a very different thing from what I am at present. My character is now fixt, and rivetted fast upon me, and between friends, is not a very splendid one, or likely to be guilty of much fascination.

Adieu,

Adieu, my dear Cousin! So much as I love you, I wonder how the Deuce it has happened I was never in love with you. Thank Heaven that I never was, for at this time I have had a pleasure in writing to you, which in that case I should have forfeited. Let me hear from you, or I shall reap but half the reward that is due to my noble indifference.

Yours ever, and evermore,

W. C.

LETTER II.

Huntingdon, July 1, 1765.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Since the visit you were so kind as to pay me in the Temple, (the only time I ever saw you without pleasure) what have I not suffered? And since it has pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed? You know by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever; but, Oh the fever of the brain! to feel the quenching of that fire, is indeed a blessing which I think it imposisble to receive without the most consummate gratitude. Terrible as this chastizement is, I acknowledge in it the hand of an infinite justice; nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infinite mercy likewise, when I consider the effect it has had upon me. I am exceedingly thankful for

for it, and without hypocrisy, esteem it the greatest blessing, next to life itself, I ever received from the divine bounty. I pray God that I may ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature; which you might be apt to do, considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world—a circumstance, which before this event befel me, would undoubtedly have made me so; but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness, which without it I should never have found; and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may now inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is built. What I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others, which we have not experienced in ourselves; but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a temper inclined to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am much obliged to you both, for enquiring after me at St. Albans.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER III.

Huntingdon, July 4, 1765.

Being just emerged from the Ouze, I sit down to thank you, my dear Cousin, for your friendly and comfortable Letter. What could you think of my unaccountable behaviour to you in that visit I mentioned in my last? I remember I neither spoke to you, nor looked at you. The solution of the mystery indeed followed soon after, but at the same time, it must have been inexplicable. The uproar within was even then begun, and my silence was only the sulkiness of a thunder-storm before it opens. I am glad however, that the only instance, in which I knew not how to value your company, was, when I was not in my senses. It was the first of the kind, and I trust in God it will be the last.

How naturally does affliction make us Christians! and how impossible is it when all human help is vain, and the whole earth too poor and trifling to furnish us with one moment's peace, how impossible is it then to avoid looking at the Gospel! It gives me

some concern, though at the same time it increases my gratitude, to reflect that a convert made in Bedlam is more likely to be a stumbling-block to others, than to advance their faith. But if it has that effect upon any, it is owing to their reasoning amiss, and drawing their conclusions from false premises. He who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity, that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself; for by so doing, he ascribes a reasonable effect to an unreasonable cause, and a positive effect to a negative. But when Christianity only is to be sacrificed, he that stabs deepest is always the wisest man. You, my dear Cousin, yourself, will be apt to think I carry the matter too far, and that in the present warmth of my heart, I make too ample a concession in saying that I am *only now* a convert. You think I always believed, and I thought so too, but you were deceived, and so was I. I called myself indeed a Christian, but he who knows my heart, knows that I never did a right thing, nor abstained from a wrong one, because I was so. But if I did either, it was under the influence of some other motive. And it is such seeming Christians, such pretending believers, that do most mischief to the cause, and furnish the strongest arguments to support the infidelity of its enemies: unless profession and conduct go together, the man's life is a lie, and the validity of what he professes itself is called in question. The difference between a Christian and an Unbeliever, would be so striking, if the treacherous allies

of

of the Church would go over at once to the other side, that I am satisfied religion would be no loser by the bargain.

I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer, that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Doctor Cotton. I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness, while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my mind upon the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point, made it necessary that while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The Doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it as in that which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so.

My dear Cousin, you know not half the deliverances I have received; my Brother is the only one in the family who does. My

recovery is indeed a signal one, but a greater if possible went before it. My future life must express my thankfulness, for by words I cannot do it.

I pray God bless you, and my friend Sir Thomas.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER IV.

Huntingdon, July 5, 1765.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

My pen runs so fast you will begin to wish you had not put it in motion, but you must consider we have not met even by Letter almost these two years, which will account in some measure for my pestering you in this manner; besides my last was no answer to yours, and therefore I consider myself as still in your debt. To say truth, I have this long time promised myself a correspondence with you as one of my principal pleasures.

I should have written to you from St. Albans long since, but was willing to perform quarantine first, both for my own sake, and because I thought my Letters would be more satisfactory to you from any other quarter. You will perceive I allowed myself a very sufficient time for the purpose, for I date my recovery from the

the twenty-fifth of last July, having been ill seven months, and well a twelve-month. It was on that day my Brother came to see me; I was far from well when he came in. Yet though he only staid one day with me, his company served to put to flight a thousand deliriums and delusions, which I still laboured under, and the next morning found myself a new creature. But to the present purpose.

As far as I am acquainted with this place, I like it extremely. Mr. Hodgson, the minister of the parish, made me a visit the day before yesterday. He is very sensible, a good preacher, and conscientious in the discharge of his duty. He is very well known to Doctor Newton, bishop of Bristol, the author of the treatise on the Prophecies, one of our best bishops, and who has written the most demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity in my mind, that ever was published.

There is a village called Hertford, about a mile and a half from hence. The church there is very prettily situated, upon a rising ground, so close to the river, that it washes the wall of the churchyard. I found an epitaph there the other morning, the two first lines of which, being better than any thing else I saw there, I made shift to remember. It is by a widow on her husband.

"Thou wast too good to live on earth with me,
And I not good enough to die with thee!"

The

The distance of this place from Cambridge is the worst circumstance belonging to it. My Brother and I are fifteen miles asunder, which considering that I came hither for the sake of being near him, is rather too much. I wish that young man was better known in the family. He has as many good qualities as his nearest kindred could wish to find in him.

As Mr. Quin very roundly expressed himself upon some such occasion, "here is very plentiful accommodation, and great happiness of provision." So that if I starve, it must be through forgetfulness, rather than scarcity.

Fare thee well my good and dear Cousin.

Ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER V.

July 12, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You are very good to me, and if you will only continue to write at such intervals as you find convenient, I shall receive all that pleasure which I proposed to myself from our correspondence. I desire no more than that you would never drop me for any great length of time together, for I shall then think you only write because something happened to put you in mind

mind of me, or for some other reason equally mortifying. I am not however so unreasonable as to expect you should perform this act of friendship so frequently as myself, for you live in a world swarming with engagements, and my hours are almost all my own. You must every day be employed in doing what is expected from you by a thousand others, and I have nothing to do but what is most agreeable to myself.

Our mentioning Newton's Treatise on the Prophecies, brings to my mind an anecdote of Dr. Young, who you know died lately at Welwyn. Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with him, payed him a visit, about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health, the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him in the Doctor's eye, the appearance of a Prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when Young closed the conference thus—"My friend, there are two considerations upon which my "faith in Christ is built as upon a rock. The fall of man, the re- "demption of man, and the resurrection of man, the three cardinal "articles of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never "have invented, therefore they must be divine—the other argument "is this—If the Prophecies have been fulfilled, (of which there "is abundant demonstration) the Scripture must be the word of "God, and if the Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must "be true."

This

This treatise on the Prophecies serves a double purpose, it not only proves the truth of religion, in a manner that never has been, nor ever can be controverted; but it proves likewise, that the Roman Catholic is the apostate, and Anti-christian church, so frequently foretold both in the old and new Testaments. Indeed so fatally connected is the refutation of Popery, with the truth of Christianity, when the latter is evinced by the completion of the Prophecies, that in proportion as light is thrown upon the one, the deformities and errors of the other are more plainly exhibited. But I leave you to the book itself, there are parts of it which may possibly afford you less entertainment than the rest, because you have never been a school-boy, but in the main it is so interesting, and you are so fond of that which is so, that I am sure you will like it.

My dear Cousin, how happy am I in having a friend to whom I can open my heart upon these subjects! I have many intimates in the world, and have had many more than I shall have hereafter, to whom a long Letter, upon these most important articles, would appear tiresome at least, if not impertinent. But I am not afraid of meeting with that reception from you, who have never yet made it your interest, that there should be no truth in the word of God. May this everlasting truth be your comfort while you live, and attend you with peace and joy in your last moments. I love you too well not to make this a part of my prayers, and when I remember

remember my friends on these occasions, there is no likelihood that you can be forgotten.

Yours ever,

W. C.

P. S.—Cambridge.—I add this postscript at my Brother's rooms. He desires to be affectionately remembered to you, and if you are in Town about a fortnight hence, when he proposes to be there himself, will take a breakfast with you.

LETTER VI.

Huntingdon, August 1, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

If I was to measure your obligation to write, by my own desire to hear from you, I should call you an idle correspondent if a post went by without bringing a Letter, but I am not so unreasonable; on the contrary, I think myself very happy in hearing from you upon your own terms, as you find most convenient. Your short history of my family is a very acceptable part of your Letter; if they really interest themselves in my welfare, it is a mark of their great charity for one who has been a disappointment and a vexation to them ever since he has been of consequence enough to be either. My friend the Major's behaviour to me, after all he suffered by my abandoning his interest and my own, in so miserable a manner, is a noble instance

of generosity, and true greatness of mind: and indeed, I know no man in whom those qualities are more conspicuous; one need only furnish him with an opportunity to display them, and they are always ready to show themselves in his words and actions, and even in his countenance at a moment's warning. I have great reason to be thankful—I have lost none of my acquaintance, but those whom I determined not to keep. I am sorry this class is so numerous. What would I not give that every friend I have in the world, were not almost but altogether Christians. My dear Cousin, I am half afraid to talk in this style, lest I should seem to indulge a censorious humour, instead of hoping, as I ought, the best for all men. But what can be said against ocular proof, and what is hope when it is built upon presumption? To use the most holy name in the universe for no purpose, or a bad one, contrary to his own express commandment, to pass the day, and the succeeding days, weeks, and months, and years, without one act of private devotion, one confession of our sins, or one thanksgiving for the numberless blessings we enjoy: To hear the word of God in public, with a distracted attention, or with none at all; to absent ourselves voluntarily from the blessed communion, and to live in the total neglect of it, though our Saviour has charged it upon us with an express injunction, are the common and ordinary liberties which the generality of professors allow themselves; and what is this but to live without God in the world? Many causes may be assigned for this Anti-christian spirit, so prevalent among Christians,

but

but one of the principal I take to be their utter forgetfulness that they have the word of God in their possession.

My friend, Sir William Russell, was distantly related to a very accomplished man, who, though he never believed the gospel, admired the scriptures, as the sublimest compositions in the world, and read them often. I have been intimate myself with a man of fine taste, who has confessed to me, that though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St. Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two Disciples going to Emmaus, without being wonderfully affected by it, and he thought that if the stamp of divinity was any where to be found in scripture, it was strongly marked, and visibly impressed upon that passage. If these men, whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the scripture, what must they find there, whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the invaluable privileges of the gospel? "He that believeth on me, is passed from death unto life," though it be as plain a sentence as words can form, has more beauties in it for such a person than all the labours of antiquity can boast of. If my poor man of taste whom I just mentioned, had searched a little further, he might have found other parts of the sacred history as strongly marked with the characters of divinity, as that he mentioned. The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever

was invented; our Saviour's speech to his Disciples, with which he closes his earthly ministration, full of the sublimest dignity, and the tenderest affection, surpass every thing that I ever read, and like the spirit by which they were dictated, fly directly to the heart. If the Scripture did not disdain all affectation of ornament, one should call these, and such as these, the ornamental parts of it, but the matter of it is that, upon which it principally stakes its credit with us, and the style, however excellent and peculiar to itself, is only one of those many external evidences by which it recommends itself to our belief.

I shall be very much obliged to you for the book you mention; you could not have sent me any thing that would have been more welcome, unless you had sent me your own meditations instead of them.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER VII.

Huntingdon, August 17, 1765.

You told me, my dear Cousin, that I need not fear writing too often, and you perceive I take you at your word. At present however, I shall do little more than thank you for the Meditations, which I admire exceedingly; the author of them manifestly loved the truth with an undissembled affection,

affection, had made a great progress in the knowledge of it, and experienced all the happiness that naturally results from that noblest of all attainments. There is one circumstance which he gives us frequent occasion to observe in him, which I believe will ever be found in the philosophy of every true Christian, I mean the eminent rank which he assigns to faith among the virtues, as the source and parent of them all. There is nothing more infallibly true than this, and doubtless it is with a view to the purifying and sanctifying nature of a true faith, that our Saviour says "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life," with many other expressions to the same purpose. Considered in this light, no wonder it has the power of salvation ascribed to it! Considered in any other, we must suppose it to operate like an oriental talisman, if it obtains for us the least advantage; which is an affront to him who insists upon our having it, and will on no other terms admit us to his favour. I mention this distinguishing article in his Reflections, the rather because it serves for a solid foundation to the distinction I made in my last, between the specious professor, and the true believer, between him whose faith is his Sunday-suit, and him who never puts it off at all—a distinction I am a little fearful sometimes of making, because it is a heavy stroke upon the practice of more than half the Christians in the world.

My dear Cousin, I told you I read the book with great pleasure, which may be accounted for from its own merit, but perhaps it

it pleased me the more, because you had travelled the same road before me. You know there is such a pleasure as this, which would want great explanation to some folks, being perhaps a mystery to those, whose hearts are a mere muscle, and serve only for the purposes of an even circulation.

W. C.

LETTER VIII.

Sept. 4, 1765.

Though I have some very agreeable acquaintance at Huntingdon, my dear Cousin, none of their visits are so agreeable as the arrival of your Letters. I thank you for that, which I have just received from Droxford, and particularly for that part of it where you give me an unlimited liberty upon the subject I have already so often written upon. Whatever interests us deeply, as naturally flows into the pen, as it does from the lips, when every restraint is taken away, and we meet with a friend indulgent enough to attend to us. How many, in all that variety of characters, with whom I am acquainted, could I find after the strictest search, to whom I could write as I do to you? I hope the number will encrease, I am sure it cannot easily be diminished. Poor ——! I have heard the whole of his history, and can only lament what I am sure I can make no apology for.

Two

Two of my friends have been cut off during my illness, in the midst of such a life, as it is frightful to reflect upon, and here am I in better health and spirits than I can almost remember to have enjoyed before, after having spent months in the apprehension of instant death. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Why did I receive grace and mercy? Why was I preserved, afflicted for my good, received as I trust into favour, and blessed with the greatest happiness I can ever know or hope for in this life, while these were overtaken by the great arrest, unawakened, unrepenting, and every way unprepared for it? His infinite wisdom, to whose infinite mercy alone I owe it all, can solve these questions, and none beside him. If a free-thinker, as many a man miscalls himself, could be brought to give a serious answer to them, he would certainly say—"Without doubt, Sir, you was in great danger, you had a narrow escape, a most fortunate one indeed." How excessively foolish, as well as shocking! As if life depended upon luck, and all that we are or can be, all that we have or hope for, could possibly be referred to accident. Yet to this freedom of thought, it is owing that he, who, as our Saviour tells us, is thoroughly apprized of the death of the meanest of his creatures, is supposed to leave those whom he has made in his own image, to the mercy of chance, and to this therefore it is likewise owing that the correction which our heavenly Father bestows upon us, that we may be fitted to receive his blessing, is so often disappointed of its benevolent intention, and that men despise the chastening of the Almighty.

Almighty. Fevers and all diseases are accidents, and long life, recovery at least from sickness is the gift of the physician. No man can be a greater friend to the use of means upon these occasions than myself, for it were presumption and enthusiasm to neglect them. God has endued them with salutary properties on purpose that we might avail ourselves of them, otherwise that part of his creation were in vain. But to impute our recovery to the medicine, and to carry our views no further, is to rob God of his honour, and is saying in effect, that he has parted with the keys of life and death, and, by giving to a drug the power to heal us, has placed our lives out of his own reach. He that thinks thus, may as well fall upon his knees at once, and return thanks to the medicine that cured him, for it was certainly more immediately instrumental in his recovery than either the apothecary or the doctor. My dear Cousin, a firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence over all our concerns, is absolutely necessary to our happiness. Without it we cannot be said to believe in the Scripture, or practise any thing like resignation to his will. If I am convinced that no affliction can befall me without the permission of God, I am convinced likewise, that he sees and knows that I am afflicted; believing this, I must in the same degree believe that if I pray to him for deliverance, he hears me; I must needs know likewise, with equal assurance, that if he hears, he will also deliver me, if that will upon the whole be most conducive to my happiness; and if he does not deliver me, I may be well assured that he has none

none but the most benevolent intention in declining it. He made us, not because we could add to his happiness, which was always perfect, but that we might be happy ourselves; and will he not in all his dispensations towards us, even the minutest, consult that end for which he made us? To suppose the contrary, is (which we are not always aware of) affronting every one of his attributes, and at the same time the certain consequence of disbelieving his care for us, is that we renounce utterly our dependence upon him. In this view it will appear plainly, that the line of duty is not stretched too tight, when we are told, that we ought to accept every thing at his hands as a blessing, and to be thankful even while we smart under the rod of iron with which he sometimes rules us. Without this persuasion, every blessing, however we may think ourselves happy in it, loses its greatest recommendation, and every affliction is intolerable. Death itself must be welcome to him who has this faith, and he who has it not, must aim at it if he is not a madman. You cannot think how glad I am to hear you are going to commence lady and mistress of Freemantle.* I know it well, and could go to it from Southampton blind-fold. You are kind to invite me to it, and I shall be so kind to myself as to accept the invitation, though I should not for a slight consideration be prevailed upon to quit my beloved retirement at Huntingdon.

Yours ever,

W. C.

* Freemantle, a Villa near Southampton.

LETTER IX.

Huntingdon, Sept. 14, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The longer I live here, the better I like the place, and the people who belong to it. I am upon very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd, scrambling fellows like myself. The last acquaintance I made here is with the race of the Unwins, consisting of father and mother, son and daughter, the most comfortable, social folks you ever knew. The son is about twenty-one years of age, one of the most unreserved and amiable young men I ever conversed with. He is not yet arrived at that time of life, when suspicion recommends itself to us in the form of wisdom, and sets every thing but our own dear selves at an immeasurable distance from our esteem, and confidence. Consequently he is known almost as soon as seen, and having nothing in his heart that makes it necessary for him to keep it barred and bolted, opens it to the perusal even of a stranger. The father is a clergyman, and the son is designed for orders. The design however is quite his own, proceeding merely from his being and having always been sincere in his belief and love of the Gospel. Another acquaintance I have lately made is with a Mr. Nicholson, a North-country divine, very poor, but very good, and very happy. He reads prayers here twice a day, all the year round, and travels on foot to serve two churches every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home again being sixteen miles.

miles. I supped with him last night. He gave me bread and cheese, and a black jug of ale of his own brewing, and doubtless brewed by his own hands. Another of my acquaintance is Mr. ———, a thin, tall, old man, and as good as he is thin. He drinks nothing but water, and eats no flesh, partly (I believe) from a religious scruple (for he is very religious) and partly in the spirit of a valetudinarian. He is to be met with every morning of his life, at about six o'clock, at a fountain of very fine water, about a mile from the town, which is reckoned extremely like the Bristol spring. Being both early risers, and the only early walkers in the place, we soon became acquainted. His great piety can be equalled by nothing but his great regularity, for he is the most perfect time-piece in the world. I have received a visit likewise from Mr. ——. He is very much a gentleman, well-read, and sensible. I am persuaded in short, that if I had had the choice of all England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself, and most likely I should not have chosen so well.

You say you hope it is not necessary for salvation to undergo the same afflictions, that I have undergone. No! my dear Cousin. God deals with his children, as a merciful father; he does not, as he himself tells us, afflict willingly the sons of men. Doubtless there are many, who having been placed by his good providence out of the reach of any great evil, and the influence of bad example, have from their very infancy been partakers of the graces

of his holy Spirit, in such a manner as never to have allowed themselves in any grievous offence against him. May you love him more and more day by day, as every day while you think upon him, you will find him more worthy of your love, and may you be finally accepted with him for his sake, whose intercession for all his faithful servants cannot but prevail!

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER X.

Huntingdon, Oct. 10, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I should grumble at your long silence, if I did not know, that one may love one's friends very well, though one is not always in a humour to write to them. Besides I have the satisfaction of being perfectly sure, that you have at least twenty times recollected the debt you owe me, and as often resolved to pay it: and perhaps, while you remain indebted to me you think of me twice as often as you would do, if the account was clear. These are the reflections, with which I comfort myself under the affliction of not hearing from you; my temper does not incline me to jealousy, and if it did, I should set all right by having recourse to what I have already received from you.

I thank

I thank God for your friendship, and for every friend I have, for all the pleasing circumstances of my situation here, for my health of body, and perfect serenity of mind. To recollect the past, and compare it with the present, is all I have need of to fill me with gratitude; and to be grateful is to be happy. Not that I think myself sufficiently thankful, or that I ever shall be so in this life. The warmest heart perhaps only feels by fits, and is often as insensible as the coldest. This at least is frequently the case with mine, and oftener than it should be. But the mercy that can forgive iniquity, will never be severe to mark our frailties; to that mercy, my dear Cousin, I commend you, with earnest wishes for your welfare, and remain your ever affectionate

W. C.

LETTER XI.

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1765.

I wish you joy, my dear Cousin, of being safely arrived in port from the storms of Southampton. For my own part, who am but as a Thames-wherry, in a world full of tempest and commotion, I know so well the value of the creek I have put into, and the snugness it affords me, that I have a sensible sympathy with you in the pleasure you find in being once more blown to Droxford. I know enough of Miss Morley to send her my compliments, to which, if I had never seen her, her affection for you would sufficiently entitle her. If I neglected to do it sooner,

sooner, it is only because I am naturally apt to neglect what I ought to do: and if I was as genteel as I am negligent, I should be the most delightful creature in the universe. I am glad you think so favourably of my Huntingdon acquaintance, they are indeed a nice set of folks, and suit me exactly, I should have been more particular in my account of Miss Unwin. if I had had materials for a minute description. She is about eighteen years of age, rather handsome and genteel. In her Mother's company she says little, not because her Mother requires it of her, but because she seems glad of that excuse for not talking, being somewhat inclined to bashfulness. There is the most remarkable cordiality between all the parts of the family, and the Mother and Daughter seem to doat upon each other. The first time I went to the house, I was introduced to the Daughter alone; and sat with her near half an hour, before her Brother came in, who had appointed me to call upon him. Talking is necessary in a *tête-à-tête*, to distinguish the persons of the drama from the chairs they sit on: accordingly she talked a great deal, and extremely well; and, like the rest of the family, behaved with as much ease of address as if we had been old acquaintance. She resembles her Mother in her great piety, who is one of the most remarkable instances of it I have ever seen, They are altogether the cheerfulest and most engaging family-piece it is possible to conceive.—Since I wrote the above, I met Mrs. Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had

a conversation

a conversation which did me more good then I should have received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company. I am treated in the family as if I was a near relation, and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am; I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege as I am sure they intend I should, but perhaps this aukwardness will wear off hereafter. It was my earnest request, before I left St. Albans, that wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin. How happy it is to believe with a steadfast assurance, that our petitions are heard even while we are making them—and how delightful to meet with a proof of it in the effectual and actual grant of them! Surely it is a gracious finishing given to those means, which the Almighty has been pleased to make use of for my conversion—after having been deservedly rendered unfit for any society, to be again qualified for it, and admitted at once into the fellowship of those, whom God regards as the excellent of the earth, and whom, in the emphatical language of Scripture, he preserves as the apple of his eye, is a blessing, which carries with it the stamp and visible superscription of divine bounty—a grace unlimited as undeserved; and, like its glorious Author, free in its course, and blessed in its operation!'

My dear Cousin! Health and happiness, and above all, the favour of our great and gracious Lord attend you! While we

seek

seekit in spirit and in truth, we are infinitely more secure of it than of the next breath we expect to draw. Heaven and earth have their destined periods, ten thousand worlds will vanish at the consummation of all things, but the word of God standeth fast, and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

My love to all who enquire after me.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XII.

Huntingdon, March 6, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have for some time past imputed your silence to the cause which you yourself assign for it, viz. to my change of situation; and was even sagacious enough to account for the frequency of your Letters to me, while I lived alone, from your attention to me in a state of such solitude as seemed to make it an act of particular charity to write to me. I bless God for it, I was happy even then; solitude has nothing gloomy in it if the soul points upwards. St. Paul tells his Hebrew converts, "Ye are come (already come) to Mount Sion." To an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. When this is the case, as surely it was with

with them, or the Spirit of Truth had never spoken it, there is an end of the melancholy and dulness of a solitary life at once. You will not suspect me, my dear Cousin, of a design to understand this passage literally. But this however it certainly means, that a lively faith is able to anticipate in some measure, the joys of that heavenly society, which the soul shall actually possess hereafter.

Since I have changed my situation, I have found still greater cause of thanksgiving to the Father of all Mercies. The family with whom I live are Christians, and it has pleased the Almighty to bring me to the knowledge of them, that I may want no means of improvement in that temper, and conduct, which he is pleased to require in all his servants.

My dear Cousin! one half of the Christian world would call this madness, fanaticism, and folly: but are not these things warranted by the word of God, not only in the passages I have cited, but in many others? If we have no communion with God here, surely we can expect none hereafter. A faith that does not place our conversation in Heaven; that does not warm the heart and purify it too; that does not in short, govern our thought, word, and deed, is no faith, nor will it obtain for us any spiritual blessing here, or hereafter. Let us see therefore, my dear Cousin, that we do not deceive ourselves in a matter of such infinite moment. The world will be ever telling us, that we are good enough, and the same world will vilify us behind our backs. But

it is not the world which tries the heart, that is the prerogative of God alone. My dear Cousin! I have often prayed for you behind your back, and now I pray for you to your face. There are many who would not forgive me this wrong, but I have known you so long, and so well, that I am not afraid of telling you how sincerely I wish for your growth in every Christian grace, in every thing that may promote and secure your everlasting welfare.

I am obliged to Mrs Cowper for the book, which you perceive arrived safe. I am willing to consider it as an intimation on her part that she would wish me to write to her, and shall do it accordingly. My circumstances are rather particular, such as call upon my friends, those I mean who are truly such, to take some little notice of me; and will naturally make those who are not such in sincerity, rather shy of doing it. To this I impute the silence of many with regard to me, who before the affliction, that befel me, were ready enough to converse with me.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO

in the year 1791, and as other poetical pursuits, particularly his Translations from Milton, engrossed his attention in the course of that year, I apprehend he threw this admirable fragment aside, and absolutely forgot it.

It had been however, and very deservedly, a favourite of his fancy, for I never saw any of his compositions more carefully, or more judiciously corrected. The copy that I had the delight of discovering, is written on a loose half-quire of large quarto paper, with so many blotted lines, and so many blank leaves, that his Kinsman, in the hurry of looking over many old discarded paper-books, and loose sheets, might easily pass it as waste paper. I had examined a cargo of such books and papers, and was lamenting that they contained only his rejected variations of translated poetry, when this bright original first excited my wonder and delight. I could hardly have been more surprised, if a noble Oak, in its natural majesty, had started up from the turf of my garden, with full foliage before me. Surprize may have a great tendency to enhance the pleasure we derive from whatever is beautiful or sublime, but I am much deceived indeed by my partiality to the Poet, if the following fragment fails to gain new applause from the lovers of poetry, on every fresh perusal.—It is to my feelings, one of the richest and most highly-finished pieces of versification, that ever did honour to the fertile genius of my departed friend.

With

With these sentiments of its poetical merit, I enjoy an inexpressible gratification in being enabled to present it to the public, as the close of this extensive compilation, in which I have endeavoured, with affectionate zeal, to fix on the heart of our Country such a complete impression of Cowper's various excellences, as they made on my own.

YARDLEY

TO

WILLIAM AITON,

Of KEW, Esqr. F. L. S.

THE FOLLOWING EXQUISITE FRAGMENT OF A

POEM,

ON

A VEGETABLE SUBJECT,

IS INSCRIBED

AS A MARK OF AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE,

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

THE EDITOR.

PREFACE

TO THE

POEM ON YARDLEY-OAK.

AS many readers may be curious to learn some local particulars relating to an English Oak, that can never cease to attract admiration in the Poetry of Cowper, I endeavour to gratify their curiosity, by imparting to them the intelligence I have received from my friend, Dr. Johnson, the Kinsman of the Poet. I transcribe for this purpose, the following passage from one of his Letters.

" January 6, 1804.

" Among our dear Cowper's papers, I found the following memorandum—

' YARDLEY OAK IN GIRTH,
Feet 22, Inches 6½.

THE OAK AT YARDLEY-LODGE,
Feet 28, Inches 5.'

As

As to Yardley Oak, it stands in Yardley Chase, where the Earls of Northampton have a fine seat. It was a favourite walk of our dear Cowper, and he once carried me to see that Oak. I believe it is five miles at least from Weston-Lodge. It is indeed a noble tree—perfectly sound, and stands in an open part of the Chase, with only one or two others near it, so as to be seen to advantage.

"With respect to the Oak at Yardley Lodge, that is quite in decay—a pollard, and almost hollow. I took an excrescence from it in the year 1791, and if I mistake not, Cowper told me it is said to have been an Oak in the time of the Conqueror.*—This latter Oak is in the road to the former, but not above half so far from Weston-Lodge, being only just beyond Killick and Dinglederry.——This is all I can tell you about the Oaks—they were old acquaintance, and great favourites of the Bard. How rejoiced I am to hear that he has immortalized one of them in blank-verse. Where could those 161 lines lie hid? Till this very day I never heard of their existence, nor suspected it."

It is indeed surprising that Cowper never mentioned to any one of his most intimate friends, the commencement of a Poem on a subject that delighted him so much. It must have been written in

* Cowper has mentioned this circumstance in writing to Mr. Rose, (Letter 105, Vol. 1.) He says, the Tree has been known by the name of Judith for many ages. Perhaps it received that name on being planted by the Countess Judith Niece to the Conqueror, whom he gave in marriage to the English Earl Waltheof, with the counties of Northampton and Huntingdon, as her dower.

M. Mason delin.
Dec.r 1864

Judith

YARDLEY-OAK.

SURVIVOR sole, and hardly such, of all
That once liv'd here thy brethren, at my birth
(Since which I number three-score winters past)
A shatter'd veteran, hollow-trunk'd perhaps
As now, and with excoriate forks deform,
Relicts of ages! Could a mind, imbued
With truth from Heaven, created thing adore,
I might with rev'rence kneel, and worship thee!

It seems idolatry with some excuse,
When our fore-father Druids in their oaks
Imagin'd sanctity. The conscience, yet
Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
Lov'd not the light, but gloomy, into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscrib'd, as to a refuge, fled!

Thou wast a bauble once; a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay

Seeking her food, with ease might have purloin'd
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs,
And all thine embryo vastness, at a gulp.
But fate thy growth decreed: autumnal rains,
Beneath thy parent-tree, mellow'd the soil
Design'd thy cradle, and a skipping deer,
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepar'd
The soft receptacle, in which secure
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through.

So fancy dreams—disprove it if ye can
Ye reas'ners broad awake, whose busy search
Of argument, employ'd too oft amiss,
Sifts half the pleasures of short life away!

Thou fell'st mature, and in the loamy clod
Swelling with vegetative force instinct
Didst burst thine egg, as their's the fabled Twins,
Now stars; two lobes protruding pair'd exact:
A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,
And, all the elements thy puny growth
Fost'ring propitious, thou becam'st a twig.

Who liv'd when thou wast such? Oh! couldst thou speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees

Oracular,

Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown; but at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past!

By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recov'ring, and mistated setting right—
Desp'rate attempt till trees shall speak again!

Time made thee what thou wast—King of the woods!
And time hath made thee what thou art—a cave
For owls to roost in! Once thy spreading boughs
O'erhung the champaign, and the numerous flock,
That graz'd it stood beneath that ample cope
Uncrouded, yet safe-shelter'd from the storm.
No flock frequents thee now; thou hast out-liv'd
Thy popularity, and art become
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth!

While thus through all the stages thou hast push'd
Of treeship—first a seedling, hid in grass;
Then twig; then sapling; and, as century roll'd
Slow after century, a giant-bulk

Of

Of girth enormous, with moss-cushion'd root
Upheav'd above the soil, and sides imboss'd
With prominent wens globose—till at the last,
The rottenness, which time is charg'd to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee.

What exhibitions various hath the world
Witnessed, of mutability in all,
That we account most durable below!
Change is the diet, on which all subsist,
Created changeable, and change at last
Destroys them—skies uncertain, now the heat
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam
Now quenching, in a boundless sea of clouds—
Calm and alternate storm, moisture and drought,
Invigorate by turns the springs of life
In all that live, plant, animal, and man,
And in conclusion mar them. Nature's threads,
Fine, passing thought, e'en in her coarsest works,
Delight in agitation—yet sustain
The force that agitates not unimpair'd,
But worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
Of their best tone their dissolution owe.

Thought cannot spend itself comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth

From

From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence
Slow into such magnificent decay.
Time was, when settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root—and time has been
When tempests could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents
That might have ribb'd the sides, and plank'd the deck
Of some flagg'd admiral, and tortuous arms,
The ship-wright's darling treasure, didst present
To the four quarter'd winds, robust and bold,
*Warp'd into tough *knee-timber, many a load!*
But the axe spar'd thee; in those thriftier days
Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply
The bottomless demands of contest, wag'd
For senatorial honours. Thus to time
The task was left to whittle thee away,
With his sly scythe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom, and an atom more,
Disjoining from the rest, has unobserv'd
Achiev'd a labour, which had far and wide,
(By man perform'd) made all the forest ring.

* Knee-Timber is found in the crooked arms of oak, which by reason of their distortion, are easily adjusted to the angle formed where the deck and the ship-sides meet.

Embowell'd now, and of thy antient self
Possessing nought, but the scoop'd rind, that seems
An huge throat calling to the clouds for drink,
Which it would give in rivulets to thy root;
Thou temptest none, but rather much forbidd'st
The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite:
Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock,
A quarry of stout spurs, and knotted fangs,
Which crook'd into a thousand whimsies, clasp
The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect.

So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet
Fails not, in virtue and in wisdom lay'd,
Though all the superstructure, by the tooth
Pulveriz'd of venality, a shell
Stands now—and semblance only of itself!

Thine arms have left thee: winds have rent them off
Long since, and rovers of the forest wild,
With bow and shaft, have burnt them. Some have left
A splinter'd stump, bleach'd to a snowy white;
And some, memorial none where once they grew.
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth
Proof not contemptible of what she can,
Even where death predominates. The spring
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force,

Than

Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood,
So much thy juniors, who their birth receiv'd
Half a millennium since the date of thine.

But since, although well qualified by age
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice
May be expected from thee, seated here,
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,
Or prompter, save the scene—I will perform
Myself the oracle, and will discourse
In my own ear, such matter as I may.

One man alone, the father of us all,
Drew not his life from woman; never gaz'd,
With mute unconsciousness of what he saw,
On all around him; learn'd not by degrees,
Nor ow'd articulation to his ear;
But moulded by his Maker into man
At once, upstood intelligent, survey'd
All creatures, with precision understood
Their purport, uses, properties, assign'd
To each his name significant, and fill'd
With love and wisdom, render'd back to Heaven
In praise harmonious, the first air he drew.
He was excus'd the penalties of dull
Minority; no tutor charg'd his hand

With

With the thought-tracing quill, or task'd his mind
With problems; history, not wanted yet,
Lean'd on her elbow, watching time, whose course
Eventful, should supply her with a theme;—

SEAGRAVE, PRINTER,
Chichester.

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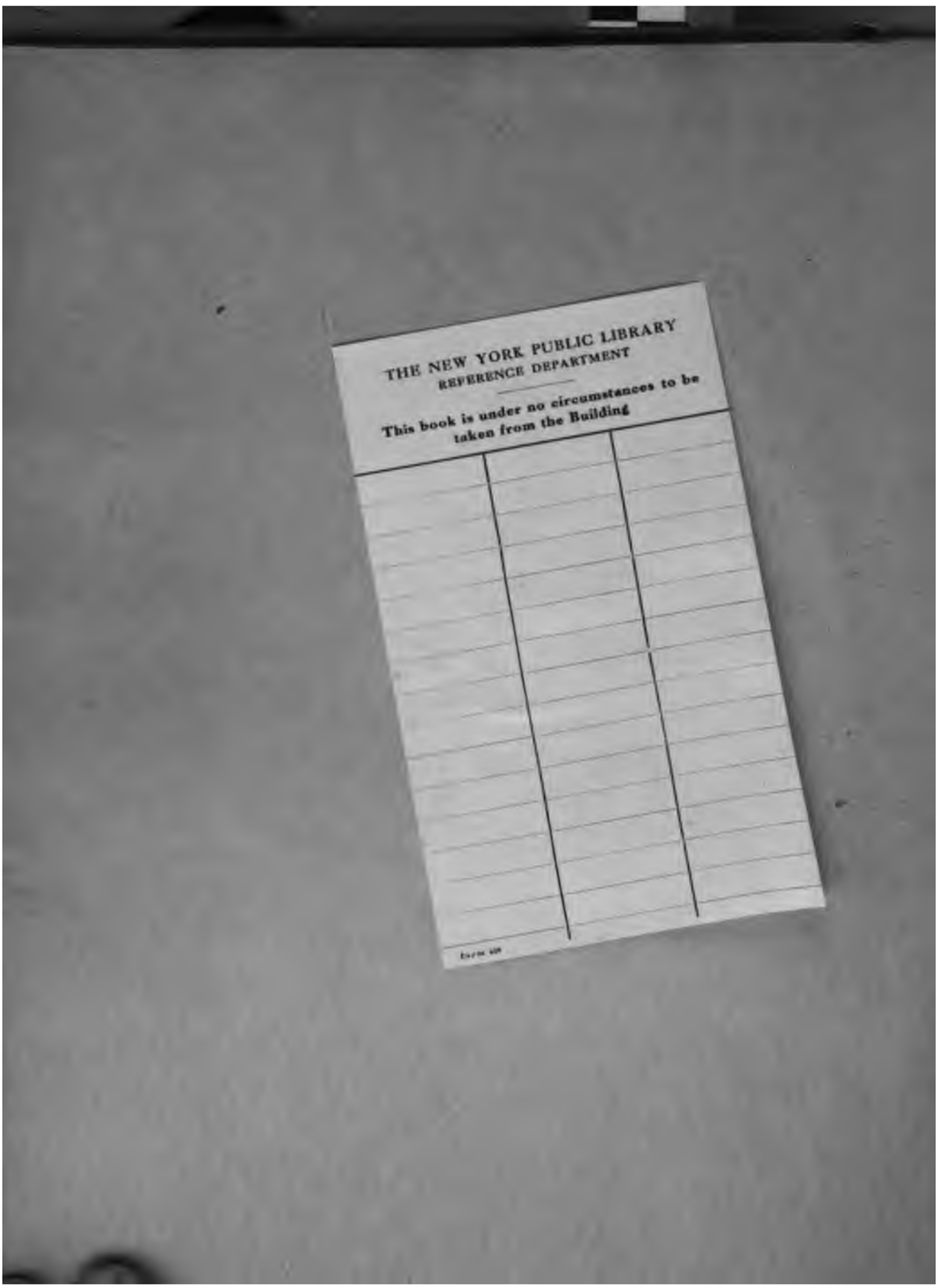
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